

**WOMEN IN MINISTRY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY EVANGELICAL CHURCH
IN THE UNITED STATES: A FOCUS ON MUTUALITY**

**A THESIS-PROJECT
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SUSAN CLARE NASH
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In memory of my sister Sherron

whose constant support of this project meant everything

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

—Genesis 1:27-28

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING	1
CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....	25
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW	56
CHAPTER 4: PROJECT DESIGN.....	69
CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES.....	76
APPENDIX A: GENERATIONAL CHARTS FROM HAYDN SHAW	105
APPENDIX B: TABLES FROM ROBERT E. WEBBER	109
APPENDIX C: ARTICLE FROM CHRISTIANITY TODAY ABOUT MILLENNIAL WOMEN	112
APPENDIX D: DEFINING A MOVING TARGET IN A CHANGING WORLD	114
APPENDIX E: APPROVAL AND ONE-PAGE INTERVIEW DOCUMENTS	117
APPENDIX F: LIST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED FOR THESIS-PROJECT.....	122
APPENDIX G: LIST OF MINISTRY WEBSITES RESEARCHED FOR THESIS-PROJECT	123
APPENDIX H: LIST OF CONFERENCES ATTENDED OR LIVESTREAMED	124
APPENDIX I: SETTINGS AT WHICH FINDINGS WERE SHARED	125
APPENDIX J: EXCERPTS FROM <i>WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING</i>	126
BIBLIOGRAPHY	128
VITA	136

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ABSTRACT

The significant challenge of postmodernity to the modern evangelical church calls for response. The deconstruction of hierachal structures and the emphasis on diversity, community and mission provide a doorway for furthering partnership and interdependence (mutuality) between men and women. By researching ministries created in the postmodern age that are outside but support the evangelical church, this thesis seeks to demonstrate a progression in mutuality from the modern to the postmodern age. It further seeks to show that this advancement is in keeping with the transformation of God's radical new community created in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

In her memoir *This Child Will Be Great*, Africa's first president describes Liberia in a paraphrased quote from Winston Churchill: "Liberia is a conundrum wrapped in complexity and stuffed inside a paradox."¹ This statement could equally describe the partnership of men and women in relationship and in mission throughout history.

The church's mission to pass the faith generationally to boys and girls, men and women throughout the world until Jesus returns has not changed. The evangelical church's commitment to the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Gospel has not changed. But in postmodern America, the evangelical church is facing the challenge of the seismic cultural shift that has also produced a different generation of men and women who are changing the church. This generation is known as the millennial generation, "the first generation to become of age in the new millennium."² Through the women's movement over the last two centuries, these millennial women have been granted more access to education, sports, professions, military service, and executive leadership opportunities. Expectations are different from prior generations. Young women assume their voice and gifts will

¹ Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa's First Woman President* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 1.

² "Millennials," Pew Research Center, accessed January 27, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/millennials/>. Also see Hayden Shaw, *Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013). Shaw's book explains the differences in the four generations working together in today's world: Traditionalists (born before 1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946-64), Generation X (born 1965-80) and Millennials (born 1981-2001). He states that his book targeted for the business world is also applicable for the church world. See Appendix A for his charts and a description of the generations.

be valued in the entire church, throughout their communities and in the world itself, not just in women's ministries.

The problem is that this has often not been the case causing Christian apologist Dorothy Sayers to exclaim, "As we cannot afford to squander our natural resources of minerals, food, and beauty, so we cannot afford to discard any human resources of brains, skills, and initiative even though it is women who possess them."³ God's plan that humanity as male and female be the agents of his blessing in the world through populating it with children and disciples and having dominion over it (Genesis 1:28) has often been thwarted. God has often brought necessary change for his purposes through disruption or death.⁴ This thesis is arguing that God is employing the disruption caused by this tectonic cultural shift and the generation who has come of age during its beginning to bring further restoration to his original design for man and woman to work in mutuality for his creational purposes.

The Nature of the Problem

American history proves that being seen and heard has been a struggle for women.

Simply, women were not viewed as an integral part of the historical record. The vast majority remained silent and invisible, their history subsumed under general descriptions of men's lives. . . . Extraordinary figures like the queens of sixteenth-

³ Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human? Penetrating, Sensible, Witty Essays on the Role of Women in Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971, 2005), 12.

⁴ A few pivotal examples are about deliverance. The deliverance of God's people from the slavery of Egypt was brought about through the death of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. The deliverance of God's people from sin and death came through the death and resurrection of his Son.

century Europe or the nineteenth-century reformers in the United States, active agents in their own right, fared no better. Though sometimes praised for having successfully assumed male roles, traditional, patronizing phrases and denigrating stereotypes abstracted and diminished even their exceptional personalities and experiences.⁵

Church history has much the same problem as noted as the *raison d'être* for Tucker and Liefield's book to help rectify the problem of the silence of church history in detailing the many women who deserved to be included from the Old Testament times to the writing of the book.

Their (women's) role in religion down through the ages has been flagrantly neglected. And it continues to be neglected, despite longstanding appeals to historians to do otherwise. Indeed, in 1922 Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., called on historians to discard their blatant sexism and take the role of women seriously—an appeal that has yet to be heeded by the vast majority of historians.⁶

A recent illustration of women wanting their voice heard took place on January 21, 2017, the day following the inauguration of President Donald Trump. The Women's March on Washington turned global with sister marches in seventy-five cities around the globe. The rallying cry was "women's rights are human rights."⁷ The estimated global attendance of between 3.3 to 4.6 million would make "this. . .the largest protest in U. S. history."⁸ What seemed to be a North American problem elicited global

⁵ Judith Zinsser, *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full* (New York: Twayne, 1993), 3. *Daughters of the Church*, cited in this work narrates the history of women in the church.

⁶ Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefield, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 13.

⁷ "The Women's March on Washington will have sister marches in over 75 countries," Isis Madrid, *PRI's The World*, January 20, 2017, accessed on February 3, 2017, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-01-20/womens-march-washington-will-have-sister-marches-over-75-countries>. It is not the purpose of this thesis to promote the reasons for or nature of the march, only to show the global strength of it to demonstrate there is a problem.

⁸ "The Exhausting Work of Tallying America's Largest Protest," Kaveh Waddell, *The Atlantic*, January 23, 2017, accessed on February 3, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/01/womens-march-protest-count/514166/>.

attention. Likewise, a journalist couple has elicited North American attention⁹ speaking about the oppression of women in developing countries:

In the nineteenth century, the central moral challenge was slavery. In the twentieth century, it was the battle against totalitarianism. We believe that in this century the paramount moral challenge will be the struggle for gender equality in the developing world.¹⁰

Elaine Storkey records a similar strong statement that “gender-based violence” is “the great unfinished business of our time and we cannot underestimate the walls which must be dismantled before it comes to an end.”¹¹ Although speaking of the horrors practiced around the world, she links it to Christianity and developed nations: “Destructive abuse in Christian families echoes the same pathological human brokenness . . . even though hidden from public view.”¹² Her concluding chapter lays both blame and a challenge at the church’s feet. Starting with misogynist statements of the early church fathers “that produced generations of bigotry,”¹³ she also recognizes that only the church can offer the hope needed for restorative justice because only the Scripture reveals God’s vision for man and woman.

This thesis-project posits that the huge cultural shift beginning around the mid-twentieth century provides a unique opportunity for the U. S. evangelical church to address the root of this global problem by leading in the restoration of God’s original

⁹ The “Introduction” of Carolyn Custis James’ book *Half the Church* references the impact of *Half the Sky* on the scope of her own book, which took its name from this book.

¹⁰ Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), xvii.

¹¹ Elaine Storkey, *Scars Across Humanity: Understanding and Overcoming Violence Against Women* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2015), 222.

¹² Storkey, 206.

¹³ Storkey, 205.

design for men and women to build God's kingdom together (Genesis 1:28). Man and woman as the "Blessed Alliance"¹⁴ was a divine, not human idea. However, the statistics and stories in the aforementioned books suggest tragedy, not blessing. The brokenness in the world especially in the area of gender relations cries out for change. Both *Half the Sky* and *Scars Across Humanity* call the church to action.¹⁵ Involvement in addressing the symptoms of the problem is happening. However, the root of the problem—gender attitudes—is more difficult to address.

Feminists have been pointing out for 50 years that the patriarchy afflicting all religions is evident in Christianity's long history. They are right. In gender attitudes, family roles, institutional structures, church history, religious hierarchies, authorship and theological interpretations the evidence is there.¹⁶

This huge philosophical and cultural shift in the 1960s is referred to as postmodernity.¹⁷ The fact that the modern evangelical church cannot continue to minister in the same ways in a postmodern world gives opportunities for needed change. The term "evangelical" is used according to the four common uses of the word

¹⁴ Carolyn Custis James has coined this phrase to express the mutuality expressed through God's blessing of Adam and Eve as a couple to fulfill the cultural mandate (Genesis 3:27). The teaching on the blessed alliance is a hallmark of her writing and also includes the related concepts of the creation of Adam and Eve in God's image and the woman as a strong warrior, *ezer kenegdo* (Genesis 2:18, 20). This teaching is to be found in her books *When Life and Beliefs Collide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), *The Gospel of Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), *Half the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011) and *Malestrom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

¹⁵ Kristof and WuDunn, 244 and Storkey, 204-223.

¹⁶ Storkey, 204.

¹⁷ "Postmodernity as a cultural phenomenon is often distinguished from postmodernism as a philosophical movement" and is difficult to define succinctly. James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 21. Treated in more depth later in this chapter, this will serve as an opening definition: "postmodernism refers to an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set." Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 12.

as noted by Robert Webber: “biblical, theological, historical and cultural.”¹⁸ Specifically, this present work argues that an increasing number of doors are opening in the present day evangelical church context to teach, encourage and lead in the understanding and practice of mutuality in ministry between men and women. These opportunities are vital because they are in line with God’s creational vision. Mutuality is being defined to encompass two aspects. The first is the development of the gifts of both men and women equally to their full potential for the fulfillment the Great Commission (I Corinthians 12:12-28; Matthew 28:18-20). The second one pertains to actual partnership or interdependence of men and women (I Corinthians 11:11) as they seek to serve Christ through whatever gifts He has given each. This requires respect for dialogue and co-operation rather than strict silos of ministry often characteristic of the modern church. This definition is greatly influenced by the dialogue between Marianne Meye Thompson and Joel B. Green in describing Fuller Theological Seminary’s commitment to women in ministry.¹⁹ Mutuality is **not** achieved when women leaders assume positions of power previously held by men, but only when God’s idea of servant leadership is about something much larger than power and authority. “When the Spirit is present in power, and Christians are intent on mission, there will always be wider spheres of opportunity and freedom for women. It is a sign of stagnation when a church turns

¹⁸ Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 14. “The *biblical* use of evangelical simply refers to the *euangelion*, the good news that salvation has arrived in Jesus Christ. . . . The *theological* use refers to those who affirm Scripture as the authoritative Word of God and accept the creeds of the early church as accurate reflections of the gospel. . . . The *historical usage* . . . refers to all those movements in history that have attempted to restore a vital historic Christianity to the church at the moments when the church has become dead in spirit or has departed from the faith of the fathers. . . . The most complex use of evangelical is the modern Protestant *cultural* usage of the word. A cultural evangelical is defined by the biblical, theological and historical uses of the term but goes one step further to be rooted in a particular paradigm of thought.”

¹⁹ Maryanne Meye Thompson and Joel B. Green, “Fuller, the Bible, and Women,” *Fuller Studio*, accessed October 15, 2016, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/fuller-the-bible-and-women/>.

inward, giving undue attention to structure, polity, and concerns over access to ecclesiastical power.”²⁰

During a twenty-two year tenure at a large southern reformed evangelical church, the staff member²¹ overseeing women’s ministries transitioned the leadership and ministry structure twice in order to keep current with the cultural shift taking place. The evolution was from a traditional circle ministry led by a lay, elected, hierarchical committee (one-size fits all) to more diverse team-based ministries loosely connected by the inclusion of team leaders on a representative ministry team working under the supervision of a seminary-trained staff member (less hierarchy and more diversification recognizing that one size does not fit all). The final transition led to a multi-generational leadership team chosen according to gifting in leading the five ministry areas of worship, discipleship, assimilation, evangelism, and service (providing a link to the vision and mission of the entire church and its leadership thus promoting mutuality). This connection facilitated a holistic framework for women to minister throughout the church and community rather than just within the silo of women’s ministries. “The typical church organizational structure tends to segregate women’s ministry as an autonomous unit—a mysterious kingdom that operates according to its own set of rules.”²²

²⁰ Glen G. Scorgie, *The Journey Back to Eden: Restoring Our View of Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 184.

²¹ The staff member is the author of this thesis who has been in professional church ministry since 1986.

²² Kate Shellnut, “The Bigger Story Behind Jen Hatmaker,” *Christianity Today*, November 15, 2016, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/november-web-only/bigger-story-behind-jen-hatmaker.html>.

These transitions indicated a deeper cultural change that reflected the growing number of generations with varying cultural mindsets working together for an unchanging, biblically-defined mission. The cultural change has had a huge impact on the women themselves, their employment status, communication patterns, leadership style, schedules, and preference of mobilization.

Several years later the same woman served as interim National Director of Women in Ministry in a Reformed denomination. The same cultural shift led to structural confusion as local evangelical churches themselves varied from traditional and pragmatic modern evangelical to younger evangelical churches.²³ In this particular denomination, another layer of complexity was added by the liberty granted to churches and presbyteries to ordain or not ordain women in ruling and teaching roles. The final solution was to eliminate the national position and turn toward a more regionalized approach with a connection to the executive committee of the denomination through representative ruling or teaching leaders. This move was directly related to shifting from a hierarchical structure to a more organic, team-oriented, grassroots approach. The shift in structure and strategy is related to the shift from the modern to the postmodern age.

²³ Webber, 15. The nomenclature used here is the terminology used by Robert Webber to describe traditional evangelical churches formed after World War II functioning until about 1975 and the dominant movement of pragmatic evangelicals functioning after 1960 and influenced by the church growth, megachurch and seeker church movements and contemporary worship. Around 2000 the “younger evangelicals” were introducing changes in ways of thinking about and doing faith. This discussion can be found in the “Introduction” of Webber’s book. See also the charts in Appendix B comparing the paradigms of traditional and pragmatic evangelicals in the modern age to the younger evangelicals in the postmodern context.

Webber explains how paradigms of thought shift from one age to the next throughout history and also within evangelical thinking.²⁴ His explanation provided clarity of understanding to the staff member of the necessity of so many transitions in structure and approach. It also explained the scope of the impact at the local, regional and national and even international levels. At the time the staff member engaged a study of the shift from modernity to postmodernity on philosophical, cultural and ecclesiastical levels. This study ultimately led to this thesis-project.

This work focuses on women in ministry in the twenty-first century U. S. evangelical context. Although many books²⁵ exist about the impact of this seismic cultural change on the church itself, not much has been written about how it has impacted women in ministry specifically as it pertains to mutuality. This chapter will include an understanding of the shift from the modern to the postmodern age, the impact of the shift on the church and why that is crucial to answer the question pursued by this thesis of whether this cultural shift is leading to a movement of women's ministries from a more gender-segregated ministry paradigm to a more integrated one of mutuality.²⁶

²⁴ See Appendix B for Webber's Table A: Paradigms of Church History from *Ancient-Future Faith* and Table 2: Comparison of Traditional, Pragmatic and Younger Evangelicals from *The Younger Evangelicals*.

²⁵ Webber's *The Younger Evangelicals* has already been mentioned but also of note is his *Ancient-Future Faith*, Phyllis Tickle's *The Great Emergence*, Diana Butler Bass' *Christianity After Religion*, Stanley Grenz's *Primer on Postmodernism*, Brian McLaren's *A New Kind of Christian*, Soong-Chan Rah's *The Next Evangelicalism*, James K. A. Smith's *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*. See the Bibliography.

²⁶ Thompson and Green.

The Emperor Has No Clothes!²⁷

The sociologist of religion Peter Berger examined the culture of modernity (that had emerged from the 17th-century Enlightenment) and found it wanting. He noted the “five dilemmas that modernity imposed on human life.”²⁸

1. Abstraction. Modernity’s institutional processes (capitalist market, bureaucracies, large cities, technology and mass communication) have brought about an abstraction which “on the level of social life . . .has entailed the progressive weakening, if not destruction, of the concrete and relatively cohesive communities in which human beings have found solidarity and meaning throughout most of history.”²⁹

2. Futurity. An emphasis on the future with dependence on watches, career paths, long-term planning has changed the temporality of human experience. “Futurity means endless striving, restlessness and a mounting incapacity for repose.”³⁰

3. Individuation. Related to the reality of abstraction caused by modernity’s megastructures is the reality of individuation or the realization of the individual self as “distinct and complicated . . .and in greater need of the personal belonging. . . . Modernity, by simultaneously making institutions more abstract and the people in them more individuated, has enormously aggravated the threat of what sociologists call

²⁷ A reference to a tale by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. According to the *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, it is “used in reference to a situation in which people believe or pretend to believe in the worth or importance of something that is worthless, or fear to point out an obvious truth that is counter to prevailing opinion.” Accessed January 21, 2017. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/the_emperor's_new_clothes.

²⁸ Peter L. Berger, “Toward a Critique of Modernity,” *Religion & the Sociology of Knowledge*, Barbara Hargrove, ed. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 335-346.

²⁹ Berger, 337.

³⁰ Berger, 339-340.

*anomie.*³¹ The *Oxford English Living Dictionary* defines *anomie* as “lack of the usual social or ethical standards in an individual or group.”³² The internationally recognized sociologist Emile Durkheim advanced the theory of anomie as it pertains to a transition from a rural to urban society.³³

4. Liberation. The emphasis on innovation and the growth in technological development provided more and more choice. “Modernization entails a multiplication of options. . . . This is the turbulent dynamism of modernity, its deeply rooted thirst for innovation and revolution. Tradition is no longer binding; the status quo can be changed; the future is an open horizon. . . . The practical question is how to sustain social arrangements that provide at least a modicum of stability in an age of dynamic uncertainties.”³⁴

5. Secularization. According to Berger, the “carrier” of secularization is industrial capitalism and a simple definition would be: “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”³⁵

³¹ Berger, 342-343.

³² *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, accessed January 21, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/anomie>.

³³ “Social Change and Anomie: A Cross-National Study,” *Social Forces* 88, no. 3 (March 2010): 1210, accessed February 23, 2017, [http://users.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/Zhao_SF_10%20\(rec%20only\).pdf](http://users.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/Zhao_SF_10%20(rec%20only).pdf). “Durkheim advances his theory of social transition where he argues that social order is maintained through social integration and regulations in a social equilibrium. All nations develop normative behavior patterns and belief systems in the evolutionary change process. During the transitional period, such as the transition from a rural society to an urban society, the diffusion of new norms and values disrupts the equilibrium of traditional societies and breaks down sacred-religious institutions, traditional beliefs and ascribed status relationships. The new organic social relationships enable individuals to challenge old cultural values and social rules, resulting in the rapid increase of anomie.”

³⁴ Berger, 344-346.

³⁵ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1967), 107-109.

Modern certainty with its hopeful optimism turned into postmodern skepticism with its belief that there was not an overarching metanarrative that explained reality: there was no absolute truth.

A New Set of Clothes

Beginning with the major cultural upheaval of the 1960s in North America, an evolving understanding of culture emerged and was called postmodernity (or postmodernism). “Postmodernism refers to an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern-mind-set.”³⁶ Thus began the failure or the toppling of the modern age.

In the eyes of postmoderns, then, modernism has failed, both as a prediction of progress and as a moral framework for culture. As a result, postmoderns take distinctly anti-modern views on the deeper questions of human life: social, political, moral, and spiritual questions. The failure of modernism means that there is no universal agreement and no prospect of universal agreement on these questions.³⁷

Brian McLaren, a prominent figure in the emerging church movement, prefers to describe postmodernity as a broad cultural movement “without having to go too deeply into postmodernism as a philosophy.”³⁸ He describes postmodernity as “postconquest,

³⁶ Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 12.

³⁷ Heath White, *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 45.

³⁸ Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2001), 19.

postmechanistic, postanalytical, postsecular, postobjective, postcritical, postorganization, postindividualist, post-Protestant, and postconsumerist.”³⁹

Soong-Chan Rah of North Park Theological Seminary specifies four major attributes of postmodernity:

While it is difficult to reduce postmodernity to a set of specific characteristics, there are four attributes of postmodernity that have been discussed at length by Christian proponents of postmodern ministry: the demise of an overarching metanarrative,⁴⁰ deconstructionism,⁴¹ virtual reality,⁴² and pluralism. American evangelicalism has taken these attributes and has applied them in the context of ministry with the corresponding emphasis on community, experience, authenticity, and diversity. American evangelicalism is responding to postmodernity with its own unique application of the postmodern ethos. The postmodern suspicion of metanarratives has created an emphasis on community and the micronarratives of local communities; the postmodern expression of deconstructionism has increased the value of experience; the postmodern experience of virtual reality has created a hunger for authenticity; and the postmodern reality of pluralism has yielded a celebration of diversity.⁴³

The emphasis on community, value of experience, hunger for authenticity and celebration of diversity noted by Rah are indicative of “the younger evangelicals.”⁴⁴

³⁹ McLaren, 19.

⁴⁰ “The Big Story of Scripture,” *Christianity Today*, November 28, 2012, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/november/big-story-of-scripture-creation-fall-redemption.html>. A metanarrative is a big story that gives meaning to all of life. The biblical metanarrative consists of creation, fall, redemption, restoration.

⁴¹ “Deconstruction,” *New World Encyclopedia*, , accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/ Deconstruction>. Deconstruction is “a term in contemporary philosophy, literary criticism, and the social sciences, denoting a process by which the texts and languages of Western philosophy (in particular) appear to shift and complicate in meaning when read in light of the assumptions and absences they reveal within themselves.”

⁴² Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 115-116. “Postmoderns . . . live in a world in which the distinction between truth and fiction has evaporated. . . . Authenticity becomes a high value The question shifts from Is it true? to Is it real?”

⁴³ Rah, 112-113.

⁴⁴ See Webber’s table in Appendix B.

However, the tenets of postmodernity elicited consternation distrust and fear to many evangelicals. The lack of an overarching metanarrative and absolute truth are opposed to Christianity and undermine faith. “To some, postmodernity is the bane of Christian faith, the new enemy taking over the role of secular humanism as object of fear and primary target of demonization. Others see postmodernism as a fresh wind of the Spirit sent to revitalize the dry bones of the church.”⁴⁵ Smith does not see postmodernism as an evil incarnate; he believes that postmodernity sets the stage for the restoration of the ancient faith. This idea is shared by Webber who points out that in the paradigms of history, the postmodern age has a similar paradigm of thinking to the ancient age with a worldview based on mystery, community and symbol.

Western history is now in a time of transition from the modern to an uncertain postmodern period. Indications of a postmodern worldview suggest that mystery, with its emphasis on complexity and ambiguity, community, with its emphasis on the interrelationship of all things, and symbolic forms of communication, with an emphasis on the visual, are all central to the new way of thinking.⁴⁶

Postmodernism can be viewed as an invitation to the church for self-assessment with an opportunity for advancing the cause of Christ in a new cultural context.

A New Ecclesiastical Wardrobe

The evangelical church has and must continue to respond to the changing postmodern world. As in former reformations, the existing structures must modify to

⁴⁵ James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 18. Smith includes authors Charles Colson, Millard Erickson, Douglas Groothuis and D. A. Carson in those who view postmodernism as an enemy and Brian McLaren, Leonard Sweet and Robert Webber in those who view it as an opportunity for the fresh wind of the Spirit.

⁴⁶ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 35.

contain transformation. The Old Testament structures of Judaism could not contain the first century church. For his followers, Jesus' sacrifice as the High Priest made the temple and sacrificial system irrelevant for the atonement of sin by providing a sacrifice once and for all (Hebrews 10: 5-10, 18-22). In the sixteenth century, the "new wine" of the Protestant faith could not be contained within the "old wineskins" within the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. This shift has ushered in a deconstruction, not only in the culture, but also within the church. A reconstruction is taking place.

The Right Reverend Mark Dyer, an Anglican bishop known for his wit as well as his wisdom famously observes from time to time that the only way to understand what is happening to us as twenty-first-century Christians in North America is first to understand that about every five hundred years the Church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale. . . . That is . . . every five hundred years the empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity . . . become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and new growth may occur.⁴⁷

Using the Protestant Reformation as an example, Phyllis Tickle suggests that when such an upheaval occurs not only does Christianity take on a new vitalized form, but also the traditional form becomes "a more pure and less ossified expression of its former self."⁴⁸ Beyond that a more significant gain is present:

. . . every time the incrustations of an overly established Christianity have been broken open, the faith has spread—and been spread—dramatically into new geographic and demographic areas, thereby increasing exponentially the range and depth of Christianity's reach as a result of its time of unease and distress.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 16.

⁴⁸ Tickle, 17.

⁴⁹ Tickle, 17.

The present work seeks to understand the impact the current “rummage sale” is having on the attitudes of men and women toward each other as the church seeks to be incarnational and missional in a postmodern world. As has already been illustrated, the brokenness in the world in the area of gender relations cries out for change. As the ecclesiastical garb of the church transforms from the modern to the postmodern age, the question is whether the relationship of men and women as they observe the Great Commandment and fulfill the Great Commission will be guided by the culture or the Scriptures. Will God’s design for man and woman be furthered through the change with the hope it will result in a furthering of the Gospel through a visible symbol of God’s radical community?

All Dressed Up and No Place to Go

Women’s movements in nineteenth and twentieth-century America brought significant change to the rights of women. Through three waves of feminism⁵⁰ and the efforts of both men and women, the “true woman” of the Victorian age clothed in piety, purity, domesticity and submission⁵¹ has evolved into the millennial woman of today outfitted with political and economic clout and choice of family and career. And yet, the goal for equality is still being sought.

⁵⁰ *Feminine Thought* by Rosemarie Tong cited in this thesis is a comprehensive treatment with clear explanations of the three waves. The first wave feminism was associated with the suffrage movement of the late nineteenth century and solidified by The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. The second wave during the 1960-80s was identified with gaining women’s civil rights and associated with Betty Freidan, the first president of the National Association of Women (NOW). The third wave seen in the 1990s to the present is associated with women’s sexual rights and in postmodern times has become very diverse in thought.

⁵¹ Alice P. Mathews and M. Gay Hubbard, *Marriage Made in Eden: A Post-Christian World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 103.

The first women's rights meeting in the U. S. was the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 in the Wesleyan Chapel where three hundred men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women.⁵² This first wave of feminism is of special note to the current work because of the theological underpinnings. Called together by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, "the most famous female Quaker preacher of the nineteenth century"⁵³ "to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition of woman,"⁵⁴ a Declaration of Sentiments and twelve resolutions were ratified and signed by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men.⁵⁵ The resolutions had a biblical basis and the Declaration of Sentiments demonstrated the need for action:

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world. . . .

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, - in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have

⁵² Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, 3rd edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 21.

⁵³ Tucker and Liefield, 285.

⁵⁴ "Report of the Women's Rights Convention," National Historical Park, New York, accessed February 18, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/report-of-the-womans-rights-convention.htm>.

⁵⁵ "Rights for Women: The Suffrage Movement and Its Leaders," National Women's History Museum, accessed February 18, 2017, <https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/rightsforwomen/SenecaFalls.html>.

immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.⁵⁶

Although the Seneca Falls meeting expressed sentiments and formed resolutions based on God's design for the equality of humanity as male and female, the second wave or liberal feminism associated with Betty Friedan's thought from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) had a secular base. Friedan became the first President of NOW in 1966 and their 1967 Bill of Rights focused on women's rights through reforming systems.⁵⁷ However, radical feminists within the second wave encouraged women to become androgynous persons.⁵⁸ Eventually, Friedan claimed that because "human wholeness" is the true "promise of feminism," feminists should move beyond a focus on women's issues (issues related to women's reproductive and sexual roles, rights, and responsibilities) in order to work with men on "the concrete, practical, everyday problems of living, working and loving as equal persons."⁵⁹ Third wave or postmodern feminism, like postmodernism, is hard to define because it celebrates diversity of thought.⁶⁰

The struggle for equality and rights of women within the civil domain has been mirrored in the ecclesiastical domain. Tucker and Liefield reflect on advances for women in the nineteenth century:

⁵⁶ Report of the Women's Rights Convention. See the website for National Historical Park listed in footnote 54 above for the entire minutes of the meeting including the Resolutions and Sentiments.

⁵⁷ Tong, 24-26.

⁵⁸ Tong, 50.

⁵⁹ Tong, 33.

⁶⁰ Tong, 270-291.

Women had made great gains in organizational work, particularly in regard to home and foreign missions and humanitarian endeavors. . . . But by the end of the century, women had made very little official headway in the established church. The vast majority of institutionalized churches barred them from ordination and from equal status on the lay level as well.⁶¹

Women did make gains in entering denominational leadership in the twentieth century but by the late 1970s and 1980s, “the issue of women in the church became a hotly debated topic that often created splits in individual churches and denominations. . . . The stricter controls on women’s ministries among evangelicals appears to have developed largely as a reaction to the feminist movement.”⁶² Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, authors of *All We’re Meant to Be*, founded the Evangelical Women’s Caucus in 1984 to promote a feminist perspective. However, in 1986, objecting to recognizing a lesbian minority and to a resolution protecting the civil rights of homosexuals, a group broke off and officially formed Christians for Biblical Equality in 1988.⁶³

Although ordination of women in the church has been a major issue in the evangelical women’s movement, the issue of women using the gifts that God has bestowed is primary. Gundry speaks not only of the inability of stopping those gifts, but of the transformative nature through time in systems that resist them:

When people with ability are shut out of an established way of doing things, they tend to generate new ways of doing things. And those ways frequently turn out to be better—not because the people generating them are necessarily superior in ability, but because, over time, institutional structures decay. . . .

⁶¹ Tucker and Liefield, 290.

⁶² Tucker and Liefield, 399.

⁶³ Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 39.

When a new idea is put into practice, a new idea for ministry, or a way of thinking about ministry...a change that may have been small begins to generate other changes.⁶⁴

The current thesis-project is not focused on ordination as a litmus test for equality but as has been mentioned is addressing the root problem out of which the debate emanates and the challenge to the church through the postmodern cultural upheaval for striving for the furtherance of mutuality.

Pastor Mandy Smith reflects on the changes brought about through these waves of feminism and the lessons she is learning from millennial women whose mothers and grandmothers grew up in the era of *The Feminine Mystique*.⁶⁵

Since this generation has seen their mothers' (and perhaps grandmothers') generation stepping into new roles, they've had a chance to learn from both the positive and negative examples of pioneering women. So Millennial women are often less reactionary than previous generations of women and are finding healing from stereotypes. They often don't feel the need for exclusive women's ministries but are comfortable in mixed groups and long to find healing between men and women. For Millennials, the way the world is heading is the only world they know—a more global, connected, diverse, risky place. Many of us in middle age look on it with uncertainty because we remember a more predictable time. But we have much to learn from these young women who look on it with hope. The things Millennials are dealing with are not passing trends but seismic cultural shifts taking place—changes that affect education, work, immigration, the family, the economy, and the institutional church, to name just a few. As much as we might lament some of these realities, Millennials are not afraid. So I'm following their lead on how to navigate a changing world with creativity and hope.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Patricia Gundry, *Neither Slave Nor Free: Helping Women Answer the Call to Church Leadership* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), vi.

⁶⁵ "Publication of the *Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan," Jewish Women's Archives: Sharing Stories, Inspiring Change, February 17, 1963, accessed February 21, 2017, <https://jwa.org/thisweek/feb/17/1963/betty-friedan>. Betty Freidan's first book written in 1963 was known for launching second wave feminism. It detailed the depression of housewives trapped in the feminine mystique of domesticity.

⁶⁶ Mandy Smith, "6 Leadership Lessons I've Learned from Millennials," *Christianity Today*, October 17, 2016, accessed on October 21, 2016. http://www.christianitytoday.com/gifted-for-leadership/2016/october/6-leadership-lessons-ive-learned-from-millennials.html?utm_source=womenleaders&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=12900907&utm_content=472497128&utm_campaign=email.

The millennial generation's value of diversity, authentic community, social justice and the church body as the visible sign (incarnation) of the eschatological church⁶⁷ foster an environment for advancement.

Exponential change creates exponential fear along with exponential hope. Massive transformation creates the double-edged cultural sword of decline and renewal. Exponential change ends those things that people once assumed and trusted to be true. At the same time, upheaval opens new pathways to the future. Change is about endings and beginnings and the necessary interrelationship between the two.⁶⁸

The values of the millennials and their desire for action and results may signal a fresh wind of the Spirit advancing God's "Blessed Alliance" in being fully equipped and laboring together in new ways toward the final renewal of perfect mutuality one day.

Strange as it may seem in this time of cultural anxiety, economic near collapse, terrorist fear, political violence, environmental crisis, and partisan anger, I believe that the United States . . . is caught up in the throes of a spiritual awakening, a period of sustained religious and political transformation during which our ways of seeing the world, understanding ourselves, and expressing faith are being, to borrow a phrase, "born again."⁶⁹

Conclusion

The relationship of men and women as the primary building block of society is attested by authors in the secular sphere. Historian Mary Beard remarks:

In 1941 Pearl Buck came back to the theme of defeated American women and methods for emancipating them—this time in a book, *Of Men and Women*. In her first chapter she accented the significance of the man-woman issue, saying that "the basic discovery about any people is the discovery of the relationship

⁶⁷ Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 17-18. Also see Appendix B.

⁶⁸ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 6.

⁶⁹ Bass, 5.

between its men and women.” Unless one understands the way men and women feel toward each other and appreciates “the place each has in the life of the whole,” one fails to grasp the reality of a country and its people.⁷⁰

Even D. H. Lawrence, considered as an articulate leader of patriarchy’s 1930-1960 assault on feminist ideas,⁷¹ recognized the worldwide impact of this relationship. He is quoted by an organization addressing gender reconciliation from a base of Eastern and Western spirituality:

Gender reconciliation is a burgeoning new field of transformational healing D. H. Lawrence once remarked that “The future of humanity will be decided not by relations between nations, but by relations between women and men.” Gender reconciliation recognizes the profound wound in the human family constellated around cultural conditioning relating to gender, sexuality, and relational intimacy. The ‘gender wound’ is manifest in myriad forms in virtually every society across the planet.⁷²

However, the world is a broken, fallen one and God’s plan for man and woman together to build the family of God and to subdue the earth has had different cultural expressions throughout all generations in this fallen world. True reconciliation is the work of the church (II Corinthians 5:16-21) and the visible sign is his redeemed radical community (Ephesians 3:14-21; Galatians 3:28). Carolyn Custis James speaks of the responsibility the church has in leading the battle for human flourishing for both men and women in the church and in society. Much is at stake in this battle including the evangelistic testimony of who God is.

I believe the church of Jesus Christ should be first in line to champion the empowerment of women and girls throughout the world to become contributing

⁷⁰ Mary R. Beard, *Woman as Force in History* (New York: Collier Books, 1946), 43.

⁷¹ Tong, 53.

⁷² Gender Equity and Reconciliation International, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://www.genderreconciliationinternational.org/gender-reconciliation-international/what-is-gender-equity-and-reconciliation>.

members in their societies. In fact, the community of God's people should be the epicenter of human flourishing—where men and women are encouraged and supported in their efforts to develop and use the gifts God has given them The church of Jesus Christ should be such a dazzling showpiece of female and male flourishing that the world will take notice.⁷³

A millennial voice, Sarah Bessey speaks of personal responsibility as a follower of Christ about the same thing:

It's a scary thing, a life-changing, paradigm-shifting thing, to honestly ask yourself this question: Am I moving with God to rescue, restore, and redeem humanity? Or am I clinging fast, eyeteeth clenched, to an imperfect world's habits and cultural customs, in full knowledge of injustice or imperfections, living at odds with God's dream for his daughters and sons?⁷⁴

God's creational vision for male and female working together and redemptive vision of a radical community is at stake as this generation navigates the cultural shift with biblical integrity for the sake of the Gospel and the flourishing of all—both men and women to the glory of God.

Theologian Gordon Fee speaks to the heart of the question posed in this thesis about the church assuming its responsibility for navigating the current cultural shift faithfully:

In an increasingly secular, individualistic and relativistic world -- dubbed “post-Christian” in the 1960s and now called “postmodern” -- the church is regularly viewed as irrelevant at best and Neanderthal at worst. Frankly, much of the fault lies with the church, especially those of us in the church who pride ourselves in being orthodox with regard to the historic faith. For all too often our orthodoxy has been diluted by an unholy alliance with a given political agenda, or diminished by legalistic and relativistic ethics quite unrelated to the character of God, or rendered ineffective by a pervasive rationalism in an

⁷³ Carolyn Custis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 76.

⁷⁴ Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women* (New York: Howard Books, 2013), 173.

increasingly non-rationalistic world.⁷⁵

In this present age, a number of factors have converged that suggest a tipping point for furthering mutuality: a shift that challenges the church to self-evaluation in light of the Gospel message for radical community, the value of the younger evangelicals for community, diversity, incarnational truth and social justice, internet connectedness and the global world, the attention in the global world of the oppression of women and the overwhelming brokenness of the world which demands the deployment of all the gifts God has given. It is in God's nature to bring light into darkness (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 18:28; Isaiah 9:2 and 60: 1-2; John 1:4-5 and 8:12; Ephesians 5:8; I John 2:9; Revelation 22:5) and to bring shape to what is "formless and empty."⁷⁶ The Spirit of God is hovering over the waters of postmodern confusion.⁷⁷ This thesis will demonstrate signs of hope for humanity emerging from the present cultural upheaval.

⁷⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, The Spirit and The People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), xiii.

⁷⁶ *The Holy Bible*: New International Version (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1986). All quotations from Scripture in this document are from this version. These are the words of Genesis 1:2 which explain the condition of the earth upon which the Spirit of God moved. His work on this earth continues to move through his Son, the Light (John 8:12) and his church, his light bearers (Matthew 5:14-16), until his work is complete on this earth (Romans 8:23; II Corinthians 3:17-18).

⁷⁷ The language is intentionally mirroring the language of Genesis 1:2 to make the point that God is sovereign over all paradigms of history from the beginning to the end of this present order.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The timeless principles and wisdom of Spirit-inspired Scripture and the theology derived from them form the guide for all centuries to frame contemporary problems. Five areas provide a biblical and theological lens through which to observe and analyze gender mutuality in the evangelical church in the twenty-first century.

First, God's relationship to time: He is eternal and infinite (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 1:8), having no beginning or end, yet His decision to create a material universe meant He would relate to his creation in time and space. This relationship would be worked out generationally. He is the God of Adam and Eve, the Blessed Alliance, as well as the millennials and the intervening as well as succeeding generations. Related to this concept of time is the idea of the realization of His plan in history involving His people as redeemed agents of reconciliation and restoration.

Second, then, God's redemptive movement in time from the garden to the new heavens and the new earth leads to a culmination of history on earth. Webb introduces a trajectory or redemptive-movement hermeneutic approach to applying Scriptures concerned with the role of women in the church.¹ He demonstrates that God works in time to accomplish the ultimate ethic.

¹ William Webb, "A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic: Encouraging Dialogue Among Four Evangelical Views," *JETS* 48, no. 2 (June 2005): 331, accessed October 28, 2016, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-2/48-2-pp331-349_JETS.pdf.

Third, ecclesiology relates to God's people through all generations as the "called-out ones"² to be his church. How the church developed especially from the apostolic to the patristic age shows a difference in the openness to the gifts of women in the church.³ The means of God's movement from one age to another is often deconstruction followed by reconstruction so that new wine can be poured into "new wineskins (Matthew 9:17)." The transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant with the abrogation of the ceremonial law would be a biblical example.⁴ The sacrifices commanded by God through Moses were fulfilled in Christ's atoning sacrifice once and for all. (Hebrews 9: 11-15) The Reformation, Martin Luther's excommunication and the formation of the Protestant branches of the church represents an example in church history. Could this pattern be what is happening currently by the challenge of the postmodern age to the modern church (I Corinthians 9:19-23)?

The current dilemma of twentieth-century modern evangelicalism is that the twentieth century cultural paradigm in which the evangelical faith was explained, proclaimed, and defended has come to an end. Because culture is in a new paradigm, the old wineskins are collapsing. It is not the faith that needs to be changed but the paradigm or the wineskin in which Christianity is communicated.⁵

² R. C. Sproul, "Ekklesia: The Called-Out Ones," June 28, 2013, accessed February 1, 2017, <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/ekklesia-called-out-ones/>. Simply stated, the called-out ones are the church, the followers of Christ throughout all time.

³ Alice P. Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), Chapter 12 of the original manuscript discussed this.

⁴ R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess: A Layman's Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 260-265.

⁵ Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 15.

Fourth, this chapter will present the dynamic unity of the Trinity and the theological principle of *perichoresis* advanced by John of Damascus⁶ as a key to this issue. Since God exists in three persons in perfect loving community, how does an understanding of the communion between the Three in One shape the understanding of gender relationships? Does the interrelating of the Trinity find expression in the interdependency of men and women?

Finally, God created humanity as *imago dei*: male and female (Genesis 1:27). What does this mean? Any consideration of the relationship between the two must begin at this point of departure. How are being male and female to be understood? Has the church's definitions of masculinity and femininity led to what God intended? What principles can inform the way in the gender-confused culture of today?

Timeless God and Time

God is outside of time but works in and through time. When He created Adam and Eve and commanded them to have dominion over the earth and fill it (Genesis 1:28), He set in motion the generations (Genesis 3:20, 4:1; Deuteronomy 6:1-3; Psalm 76: 5-6). It is through these generations that the Bible would be written, the Savior would come, and the church would be formed. The Bible relates the story of God's revelation of Himself and His plan to humanity before (Genesis 2:16-17) and after the Fall (Genesis 3:15). His intention to dwell with His people forever and to restore them and the earth to share in a state of glory is promised in the Garden, made clearer in the

⁶ Charles Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood: God, Christ and Salvation in John of Damascus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 1-7.

prophets, partially fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus and awaits ultimate fulfillment in the consummation (Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 34:25; I Peter 2: 9-10; Revelation 22). The Bible, written over fifteen hundred years, is God's call to each generation to follow him and dwell with him in the new heavens and the new earth forever (Revelation 21:3). Meanwhile, each generation is invited in its own culture to follow Jesus.

Every generation faces new issues, crises, and changes. The present generation is no exception. We bear responsibility to test afresh the timelessness of God's Word and its relevance to "today" with current scenarios, possibilities, and issues beyond the experience of previous generations. The bunker is no place for Christians to retreat when some new idea surfaces, major cultural shifts occur, an unanticipated opportunity bursts on the scene, or injustice comes to light. Instead we must fearlessly rise to the challenge.⁷

This generational development of the faith through time is the concern of biblical theology. "The Christian gospel is inextricably bound up with history, and the biblical theologian thus seeks to highlight the uniqueness of each biblical document in that succession."⁸ This theological discipline "follows the progress of revelation from the first word of God to man through to the unveiling of the full glory of Christ."⁹

Old Testament eras are denoted by terms referring to the patriarchs, slavery in Egypt, the Exodus and the desert wandering, the time of the judges, the kingdom, the divided kingdom, the Assyrian exile and the Babylonian exile and the return to the land. Through all these ages, God honored the covenant of grace He had made with Adam,

⁷ Carolyn Custis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 37-38.

⁸ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 27.

⁹ Goldsworthy, 32.

Noah, Abraham, Moses and David (Hosea 6:7; Genesis 3:15; Genesis 9:8-17; Genesis 12:2-3; Exodus 19; II Samuel 7:5-16) to be their God, to bless them with descendants and a land that they might dwell in peace. He also promised them that they would be a blessing to the entire world in revealing God's character through His law and the kingly lineage for Christ to fulfill (Genesis 12:2; II Samuel 7:16; I Kings. 8:22-26; Psalm 2:6-7). These promises are still being fulfilled in the postmodern era as the God of the patriarchs still calls worshipers and His Spirit still transforms followers in a global and pluralistic world (Matthew 28:18-20). His kingdom calls to men and women from every tribe, nation and language and from all generations, so they may dwell with Him as a new radical community (Revelation 5:9; 7:14-17; 21:24-26).

In the New Testament, the new covenant (the full expression of the covenant of grace) unfolds through the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the seating of Jesus at God's right hand (Matthew 26:28-29), all while Judea knew first century Roman domination. The Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 21:6), who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), knows that "there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9) The Traditionalists, the Boomers, Generation X and the Millennials¹⁰ are well within the scope of His providential love and calling. Although the generations are often challenged in their ability to understand each other,¹¹ God's Spirit understands the language and culture of each.

God is transcendent over time. He established the cycle of days and seasons by which time is known and reckoned (Genesis 1:14) and possesses the power to

¹⁰ See Appendix A: Generational Charts from Haydn Shaw.

¹¹ Haydn Shaw, *Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2013), 4-6.

dissolve them according to his eternal purposes (Isaiah 60:19-20); moreover, he controls world history, determining in advance the times set for all nations and bringing them to pass (Daniel 2:21; Acts 17:26). But God is not limited by time (Psalm 90:4). It in no sense diminishes his person or work: the eternal God does not grow tired or weary (Isaiah 40:28) and his purposes prevail (Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 46:10).

Furthermore, God imminently expresses concern for his creation. He reveals himself in history according to the times and dates set by his own authority (Acts 1:7) and will bring about in his own time the consummation of world history in Jesus' return (Ephesians 1:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:15).¹²

God, the great "I Am," is sovereign over history. He calls His people from every generation, whether they are premoderns, moderns or postmoderns (Psalm 145:13).

"Premoderns placed their trust in authority. Moderns lost their confidence in authority and placed it in human reason instead. Postmoderns kept the modern distrust of authority but lost their trust in reason and have found nothing to replace it. This is the crux of all postmodern thought."¹³ With God's sovereignty in mind, the Christian church has refined its understanding of God's gospel revelation through history. Goldsworthy states, "Great Christian thinkers and movements, creeds and councils, breakaway movements and controversies are all part of the history of Christian thought and doctrine which is the concern of historical theology."¹⁴

Diana Butler Bass speaks to the changes in view today. "Ours is a time of awakening, even a Great Awakening, in line with other such periodic awakenings in

¹² Walter A. Ewell, *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), accessed July 24, 2015, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/>.

¹³ Ellen White, "Defining Biblical Hermeneutics," *Biblical Archeology Review*, September 3, 2016, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/bible-interpretation/defining-biblical-hermeneutics>.

¹⁴ Goldsworthy, 30.

North American history, a time of cultural revitalization and reorientation rather than a time of religious apocalypse."¹⁵

Harvey Cox identifies this experiential Christianity as the "Age of the Spirit," when "faith as a way of life or a guiding compass has once again begun."¹⁶ Bass further notes that this "relational community, intentional practice, and experiential belief are forming a new vision for what it means to be Christian in the twenty-first century, a pattern of spiritual awakening that is growing around the world."¹⁷ She connects past spiritual awakenings to those of today and the future.

Every spiritual awakening seeks to make visible, even if only in some incomplete way, God's dream for creation. And each has succeeded in some way in doing so, as awakenings have resulted in greater compassion and equality in history. Jonathan Edwards imagined each awakening as ripples in the pool of history; throw a pebble in the water and each successive wave moves farther and farther toward the shore. This awakening will not be the last in human history, but it is our awakening. It is up to us to move with the Spirit instead of against it, to participate in making our world more humane, just, and loving.¹⁸

In this era when relationship, connection, community and authenticity, symbol and incarnation are true values, the community of God's people becomes an important visible statement of who God is and how He acts. Such a holistic picture includes issues of race, gender and class, but also the irenic relationship of the church itself to its own culture.

¹⁵ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 32.

¹⁶ Bass, 214. Bass also quotes Cox on page 109 as he identifies the Age of the Spirit as "nondogmatic, noninstitutional, and nonhierarchical Christianity, based on a person's connection to the 'volatile expression' of God's Spirit through mystery, wonder, and awe."

¹⁷ Bass, 214.

¹⁸ Bass, 269.

The Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic

Related to the theological disciplines of biblical and historical theology is the important area of hermeneutics (principles of biblical interpretation). James Sanders' definition as "interpretive lens[es]" through which one reads the Bible underscores the idea that there are different approaches.¹⁹ One approach that seeks to help in the understanding of issues regarding what the Bible teaches about women is the redemptive-movement approach. This method seeks to discern the cultural from the transcultural in "applying the ancient text in the modern context."²⁰

Although this approach is primarily attributed to William Webb, other theologians have embraced it as well. Glen Scorgie states:

Scripture's teaching on gender relations can be envisioned in two ways: *static* or *teleological*. . . . The static vision locks the Christian community into the gender norms prevailing at the time the New Testament was written. The latter discerns a path from tragedy to redemption, a process to which we are called to contribute. It attempts to discern the movement of the Spirit as God continues to lead the church forward along a vector established by the central impulses of the gospel."²¹

This vector leads to the culmination of the gospel and history in the new heavens and the new earth and sets a path for sanctification and change toward that consummation.

¹⁹ Ellen White, "Defining Biblical Hermeneutics."

²⁰ William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 13.

²¹ Glen G. Scorgie, *The Journey Back to Eden: Restoring the Creator's Design for Women and Men* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 28.

Webb treats these three groups—slaves, women and homosexuals—as case studies to show how the redemptive-movement hermeneutic is applied.²² By applying the redemptive hermeneutic lens, Webb demonstrates how slavery has come to be universally understood as an evil opposed by the Spirit of God even when there is no clear prohibition against it in Scripture. Following the same method, he demonstrates that the ideal ethic regarding homosexuality is always prohibition throughout Scripture. The contrast of the result of the redemptive movement lens as applied to slavery and homosexuality causes the application of this approach with references to women to have a close correlation to the issue of slaves. The biblical references on women are seen to reach an ideal ethic in mutuality, not patriarchy. Scorgie reflects Webb's conclusion:

Gender is a front-burner issue today, and Christians properly look to Scripture for guidance on the matter. As we look to the Bible we need to discern the direction the Spirit is moving as he progressively unfolds God's will. It is important to understand what the Bible says; it is equally important to recognize where the Bible is headed. The Holy Spirit is nudging the people of God today toward a fuller embrace of the gospel vision of gender equality, freedom, and mutuality. The Spirit is leading us on a long journey home to the original Garden way of doing life. And keeping in step with the Spirit requires, as we shall see, letting go of hierarchical paradigms for male-female relationships.²³

The redemptive-movement hermeneutic operates on the principle that the ultimate ethic in relationships will one day be realized at the consummation but serves as a goal to work toward in sanctification. In gender relations, this would mean working toward the equal flourishing of men and women together in mutuality without hierarchy.

²² Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*, 35. Components: (1) redemptive movement, (2) a multilevel ethic, (3) a balanced perspective, (4) cultural/transcultural assessment and (5) the underlying spirit within a text.

²³ Scorgie, 35-36.

Ecclesiology

Although the name “church” is used of the New Testament first century church, Adam and Eve were God’s first church. They were called out by God to belong to him. Much history is encompassed between this first church and the New Jerusalem with men and women from every language, nation and tribe. Because this thesis is considering the mutuality of men and women in the church, ecclesiology is front and center of the discussion. The following paragraphs will give a brief review of men and women working together to advance God’s kingdom in the “church” of the Old Testament, during the life of Jesus on earth and in the apostolic church. However, the final discussion will entail insight into the political and cultural circumstances leading to a change in the third century.

Although patriarchy is the cultural backdrop of Scripture, it is not the message.²⁴ Even in the Old Testament, women served God in the role of prophet and judge. Miriam, along with Moses and Aaron, was active in leadership during the Exodus and led the women in worship (Exodus 15:20). When the book of the Law was rediscovered in the temple, Josiah consulted Huldah, the prophetess, during the time when the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah were living (II Kings 22:14-20). Deborah was the prophetess and the judge of Israel who declared that God would hand the enemy Sisera over to a woman (Jael) because of Barak’s refusal to go to battle unless Deborah accompanied him (Judges 4).

²⁴ Carolyn Custis James, *Malestrom: Manhood Swept into the Currents of a Changing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 31.

Other women played an important role in God's redemptive plan along with men. Tamar was called by her father-in-law Judah more righteous than he because he failed to follow the Levirate law (Genesis 38: 6-30). Zipporah circumcised her son to save the life of her husband Moses (Exodus 4:25); Hannah prayed for a son and gave Samuel to Eli to raise as a prophet (I Samuel 1). Rahab hid the spies sent into the Promised Land (Joshua 2). Abigail reminded David of the weight of his kingship saving him and her husband (I Samuel 25:14-35). Ruth, a Moabitess, accompanied and provided for Naomi as she returned to Bethlehem. She became the great-grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:13-22). Esther with the aid of Mordecai risked her life to save the Jewish people during exile under a Persian king (Esther 4:15-17).

Jesus' treatment of women departed radically from the culture of his day. Although he did not call any into the group of his twelve apostles, women were not only among the disciples following him, but funded his ministry (Luke 8:1-3). He brought attention to women's faith, healed their shame and called them into ministry: the Syrophenician woman (Matthew 15:22-28), the woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:40-56) and the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11). He was a close friend of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. He allowed Mary to sit at his feet as a rabbi would allow his students (Luke 10:38-42) and publically recognized for all time her deep spiritual understanding and devotion (Mark 14:3-9). Jesus made a point to go to Samaria to intersect the life of a woman scorned by her society. Through her belief in Jesus as the Messiah, she became an evangelist to the townspeople who had rejected her. Jesus also called Mary Magdalene to be the one to first proclaim his resurrection to the apostles.

Paul using a quote from Psalm 68 links Jesus' ascension to the giving of gifts to humanity (Ephesians 4:8) and then mentions some of those gifts and the motive for their distribution:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).

No gender distinction is made in the mention of these gifts. Then Luke in describing the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost²⁵ quotes from the prophet Joel, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18).

The first-century church reflects this pouring out of the Spirit as both men and women exercised their gifts in very dangerous times. The apostles and the women prayed together, sometimes in the house of Mary, mother of John (Acts 1:14; Acts 12:12). Before Paul was converted, he sought to destroy the church, going house to house, dragging and imprisoning men and women alike for their worship of Jesus (Acts 8:3). Phoebe was a deacon, Junia an apostle, and Priscilla a teacher of Apollos. A number of other women co-labored with Paul (Romans 16). Lydia helped Paul in starting the church at Philippi. Alice Mathews sums it up this way:

Jesus was clear: ministry is not about position and authority; it's about servanthood. The apostle Paul recognized that God gifted women as

²⁵ *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 1909. Note on Ephesians 4:8: "In Jewish worship this Psalm (68) had come to be associated with Pentecost . . ." Psalm 68:11 says "The Lord announces the word, and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng."

well as men to serve Christ and his kingdom. Women served alongside the apostle in every form of ministry. The nature of ministry is that we come together, each serving with the gifts God has given us, to build God's church on earth. We do violence to God's plan - the Blessed Alliance - when we construct a gender-based hierarchy elevating men over women when the two were created to work side by side as equals.²⁶

The fact that the first century church was composed of house churches²⁷ facilitated the ability of men and women to work together. One reason for this is the more private rather than public nature of the setting. In the culture of the Roman Empire, "men were active in the public square; women were restricted to the private household. The highest virtues of a public man were his courage, justice, and self-mastery. The highest virtues of a private women were her chastity, silence, and obedience."²⁸ Such qualities were also valued in the Victorian era of modern history.²⁹

By the third century, the church began to look different and the scope of the ministry of women became attenuated. Whereas during the first century or Apostolic Age, kingdom ministry operated according to gifts rather than gender, the third century ushered in a change.

The organizational models for churches began to shift from an emphasis on ministry to an emphasis on governance. Tertullian used the model of Roman political life to shape the basic features of Christianity: the church should resemble the political structure of the Empire. He shifted the church from an egalitarian household model to the church as a legal body. ... With this shift,

²⁶ For an extended discussion of the public/private dichotomy in Greco-Roman life, see Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 103-126.

²⁷ Kwabena Donkor, "New Testament House Churches: A Model for Today's Complex World?," *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* (April 2008), accessed February 2, 2017, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2008/04/new-testament-house-churches.html>.

²⁸ Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 162.

²⁹ Kathryn Hughes, "Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians," The British Library, accessed February 2, 2017, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>.

three things happened: the church moved from the private sphere to the public sphere, a pecking order within the clergy was born, and a wall was constructed between clergy and laity.³⁰

As has been noted in Chapter One of this thesis, many perceive the present age to be one of those great shifts.³¹ As the Postmodern Age unfolds, with many values similar to those in the first-century church, observers may wonder whether the shift to the postmodern age will be accompanied by a return to a ministry model of mutuality as seen in the first-century church. Certainly, the question Walter Liefeld posed in 1987 is still a valid question for today's evangelical church to answer: "The present stalemate over differences in exegesis might be transcended, at least to a degree, by rethinking our theology of ministry. Instead of focusing on restrictions, should not Christians work together in a common, positive endeavor to open new avenues of ministry to our gifted and devoted sisters in Christ?"³²

The Dynamic of the Trinity as a Model for Male-Female

Viewing the Trinity as relational more than intellectual, C. S. Lewis observes this "living, dynamic activity of love has been going on in God forever and has created everything else."³³ The idea of *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling) describes the unity within the Trinity as each person, Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in

³⁰ Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 162.

³¹ Bass, 32.

³² Walter L. Liefeld, "Women and the Nature of Ministry," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 30, No. 1, (March 1987), 61.

³³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Fontana, 1955), 147.

complicated and beautiful ways. Such a dynamic translates into the work of the church as it grows in diversity and impact. Its applications extend to equality and subordination within the Godhead and give insight to a model for gender relations.

This mutual indwelling has fueled debate, controversy, and even condemnation in centuries past. Athanasius, “demoted and banished for his convictions,”³⁴ was vindicated as consensus emerged toward his interpretation. The Nicene Creed (325 A.D.) and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 A.D.) embodied these ideas and declared the equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit and that the Father and Son were of the same substance.³⁵ This included the eternal begottenness of the Son from the Father and the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and Son.

Although John of Damascus was not the first to conceive of the idea of *perichoresis* to explain the relationship of the Trinity, he was the church father who is noted for developing the term and for his work on the doctrine.³⁶ He wrote, “For . . . they are made one not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other, and they have their being in each without any coalescence or commingling.”³⁷ In writing about the concept, Alister McGrath notes that it “allows the individuality of the persons to be maintained, while insisting that each person shares in the life of the other two. An image often used to express this idea is that of a 'community of being,' in which each

³⁴ Scorgie, 42.

³⁵ Scorgie, 43.

³⁶ Twombly, “Introduction.”

³⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 181.

person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them."³⁸

These two theologians centuries apart guard against what Miroslav Wolf calls two threats to the community of being in the Godhead: "dissolution and equality."³⁹ This community of being is also determinative of the community of humanity. The dance between the complete self-giving of the Son to the Father and to those He came to serve and the complete presence of the Father in the Son cannot lead to the dissolution of the Son as though colonized by the Father.⁴⁰ Both the integrity and equality of personhood must be safeguarded. It follows that this statement would be ontologically true also for relationships between those who are made in his image.

The discussion of hierarchy in gender relations inevitably leads to the idea of the equality of Jesus with the Father alongside his submission to His Father. The question is asked whether the Son is subordinate to the Father. If so, the point is made that woman can be at the same time both equal and submissive to the man. In the case of Jesus, a distinction is made in a functional or federal versus an ontological subordination. Donald Macleod in *The Person of Christ* asserts a "functional subordination" implicit in "the incarnation and mission of the Son."⁴¹ "Yet this state of dependence, accountability and

³⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell, 2001), 325, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://www.theopedia.com/Perichoresis>.

³⁹ Wolf, 179-180. Wolf recognizes Jürgen Moltmann as "the most notable representative of Trinitarian thinking which both refuses to dissolve persons into relations and seeks to affirm their equality. . . . Though (he) underlines that divine persons are not self-enclosed individuals, but are determined in their particular personal identity by other persons, he refuses to reduce persons to relations. The concept of person as relation both 'dissolves the Trinitarian concept of person' and 'does away with the interpersonal concept of relation.'"

⁴⁰ Wolf, 178-180.

⁴¹ Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 76.

subordination on the part of the Incarnate Son is always contrasted with another state of the same Son. Before becoming Servant, he was equal with God.”⁴² To guard against any idea of eternal subordination, Macleod evidences the *pactum salutis* (covenant of redemption) and states, “it is in terms of this covenant that the Son becomes servant: not by the Father’s bare decree, but of his own volition and by mutual consent, his incarnation reflecting not only the Father’s love for the church but his own. From this point of view, New Testament subordinationism is federal, not ontological.”⁴³ This kind of equality and mutuality is needed to inform the relations of men and women within the evangelical community.

Author Jackie Roese founded the Marcella Project in order to transform “the way women view themselves and the way the faith community views women, so that the Church can change what’s happening to women and girls around the globe.”⁴⁴ The catalyst for the foundation of this ministry emanates from her own story told in her recent book *Lime Green*. Her invitation to preach by the leadership of her Dallas church galvanized media attention, widespread publicity, support, and threats. In the introduction to her book, she brings up the concept of *perichoresis*:

(It) describes not hierarchy and not power but mutual indwelling in the endless dance of self-sacrificing love for the others. That’s *Who God Is*, not what God does. If God is like that, the church that has been created by this Father-Son-

⁴² Macleod, 76-77.

⁴³ Macleod, 77-78.

⁴⁴ Jackie Roese, “The Ministry,” The Marcella Project, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://www.marcellaproject.com/#the-mission>.

Spirit ought also to be perichoretic. In other words, our God was not a power-perpetuating God but a power-surrendering God.⁴⁵

Her words answer the question that Volf poses in his chapter relating to the idea of *perichoresis* in the Godhead to relationships in humanity: “Can such complex identity that rests on the twin notions of “self-giving” and “mutual indwelling” be brought from heaven down to earth? He attempts to answer his own question: “In a sense, this ‘bringing down’ is the goal of the whole history of salvation: God came into the world so as to make human beings, created in the image of God, live with one another and with God in the kind of communion in which divine persons live with one another.”⁴⁶ God’s initiative throughout redemptive history has translated his complex identity, Who He Is, into that of his people, Who We Are.

Image of God: Male and Female

The consideration of the community of the Godhead is foundational to an exploration of the community of humanity. Society and the church began with God making male and female in His image in the Garden “to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.”⁴⁷ God’s intentional design for His image bearers was as partners and co-rulers with Him in the Kingdom (Genesis 1:28; 2: 21-24). This section will explore God’s intention in creation, the fall, redemption, and even consummation through the lens of

⁴⁵ Jackie Roese, *Lime Green: Reshaping Our View of Women in the Church* (Dallas: HIS Publishing Group, 2015), ix.

⁴⁶ Volf, 181.

⁴⁷ *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible*, 2213. This is the answer to the first question of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* that asks “What is the chief end of man?”

gender. If God's ultimate ethic for gender relations is to be found in the new heavens and the new earth, knowing the beginning and the endpoint of the pathway is essential.

What then does it mean to be created in the image of God?

When Scripture mentions specific ways in which people resemble God or Jesus Christ, it usually focuses on moral qualities like righteousness (Ephesians 4:24), ethical perfection (Matthew 5:48), purity (1 John 3:2ff., 9) love (John 13:14, 35ff.; Titus 3:4; 1 John 3:10, 16-18; 4:7-20), forgiveness (Matthew 6:14ff.; Colossians 3:13, humility (Philippians 2:3-11), holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Leviticus 19:1), and knowledge (Colossians 3:10).⁴⁸

These moral characteristics are a reflection of God's holiness and the mental characteristics demonstrate his intellect and freedom. These are equally present in both male and female as image bearers. Instead of listing attributes, Kilner defines the image of God as a person, the person of Christ. "According to II Corinthians 4:4, Christ *is* God's image. Yet four verses earlier (3:18), when people are in view, they need transformation into the divine image. God's intention from the beginning has been to conform people to God's image—to Christ (Romans 8:29)."⁴⁹

Also significant is how the image of God would be viewed by people in ancient cultures who worshiped their many gods through images placed in the land. Yahweh prohibited images being made (Exodus 20:4). He had already created His image-bearers: male and female who were to encourage worship of the One True God. He also gave them four words that set a trajectory for their lives in the world into which they were placed: fruitful/multiply and rule/subdue. These commands were given to both who

⁴⁸ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 225-26.

⁴⁹ J.F Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 91.

would have a role in biological and spiritual parenting as well as in creating culture. “The Bible doesn’t present different or competing visions for God’s sons and daughters. God’s vision for this world is singular, whole, and unified. Male and female callings are not separate issues. They are interwoven, interdependent, and inseparable in the Bible.”⁵⁰ The fall would cripple their ability to do this and would catalyze the resistance they would encounter in carrying out both these roles. However, the second creation account reveals that these commands were meant for a partnership.

The second chapter of Genesis narrates the sequential creation of the man out of the dust of the earth and the woman out of the side of the man. The Hebrew words in the passage used for the woman are *ezer kenegdo*. The King James Version translated this as “help meet.” A deeper investigation shows a much stronger meaning. In her book *When Life and Beliefs Collide*, Carolyn Custis James makes the case for the military use of the noun and verb form of *ezer/azer* from its uses in the Bible. The word *kenegdo* gives the connotation of “an equal” or “corresponding to.” A better translation of the phrase would be, “a warrior equal or corresponding to him.”⁵¹

She is a valiant warrior conscripted by God, not to fight against the man but to fight at his side as his greatest ally in the war to end all wars. Even before creation, the battle lines were drawn between God and the powers of darkness. In the garden, God wasn’t weaving a great romance. He was building an army, and the enemy was waiting to launch his first attack. Adam and Eve were not simply our first parents. They were God’s first recruits, and both of them would soon be in the line of fire. Their mission was overwhelming—more than the two of them could handle together, much less face alone. They would need each other, not just for the sake of company but for strength to fight the battle that lay ahead. The aloneness of the man and the creation of the woman converge in

⁵⁰ James, *The Malestrom*, 26.

⁵¹ Carolyn Custis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God’s Global Vision for Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 112.

the first great lesson in God's school of human relations: that men and women need each other.⁵²

It should be noted that God's first worshipers (the first "church") and first missionaries (the "church militant") were male and female—not two males or two females. A unified diversity was created, but soon fell apart (Genesis 3:7). The Enemy entered and the relational splintering began—first from God, then from each other (Genesis 3:12). The God-paired allies were divided. Instead of fighting the battle with a united front, the battle was and still is often turned on each other. God's relational pursuit of them was to heal the relationship between Him and them (Genesis 3:15; II Corinthians 5:21) and also between them. In speaking of the segment of the third chapter of Genesis in which God confronts Satan, Adam and Eve revealing the results of the fall in their lives, Scorgie speaks of verse fifteen:

According to this verse, then, Satan is at war with the woman, and as Madame Blocher-Sailens, a leading twentieth-century Baptist pastor in France suggested, "that war continues to the present time." It is a sobering consideration that sexism may be one of the principalities and powers against which the people of God must wrestle today.⁵³

The truth of this statement is apparent today, as the battle rages globally.⁵⁴ The battle is both overt and subtle, just like its origin. The interpretation of this very passage is debated as it continues to explain the consequences of sin to the woman and to the man (Genesis 3:16-19). Is the woman's "submission" to the man a consequence of the

⁵² Carolyn Custis James, *When Life and Beliefs Collide: How Knowing God Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 187-188.

⁵³ Scorgie, 91.

⁵⁴ Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's *Half the Sky* as well as Elaine Storkey's *Scars Across Humanity* referenced in Chapter 1 illustrate this vividly.

fall? Usually egalitarians say “yes,” and complementarians say, “no.” “The Statement on Men and Women in Biblical Equality” represents the egalitarian position of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE). “The Bible teaches that the rulership of Adam over Eve resulted from the Fall and therefore was not a part of the original created order. Genesis 3:16 is a prediction of the effects of the Fall rather than a prescription of God’s ideal order.”⁵⁵ In opposition to this view is the one expressed by Bruce Ware for The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW).

Sin introduced into God’s created design many manifestations of disruption, among them a disruption in the proper role-relations between man and woman. As most complementarians understand it, Gen. 3:15-16 informs us that the male/female relationship would now, because of sin, be affected by mutual enmity. In particular, the woman would have a desire to usurp the authority given to man in creation, leading to man, for his part, ruling over woman in what can be either rightfully-corrective or wrongfully-abusive ways.⁵⁶

The present thesis demonstrates a progression over time from Eden to the new heavens and new earth. This author is arguing that an equality and non-hierarchical partnership was disrupted by the fall with the result of the hierarchy.

This same fifteenth verse that speaks of the war being waged between the serpent and the seed of the woman also reveals the Redeemer of the fallen world who would appear in time (Galatians 4:4). Jesus is the Ultimate Image of God (John 14:9; Hebrews 1:3a). Carolyn Custis James speaks of Jesus as the “Missing Chapter” of Genesis (between chapters two and three). What she means by this is

⁵⁵ “Men, Women, and Biblical Equality,” CBE International, accessed March 3, 2017, http://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/english_3.pdf.

⁵⁶ Bruce Ware, “Summaries of the Egalitarian and Complementarian Positions, June 26, 2007, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://cbmw.org/uncategorized/summaries-of-the-egalitarian-and-complementarian-positions/>.

the account of the perfect male-female relationship. His life demonstrates what it means to be perfect man. His relationships with the women of his day reveals what Webb would call “the ultimate ethic”⁵⁷ in gender relations. “Jesus’ association in public with women who were not his kin was a scandalous breach of decorum and a challenge to the gender boundaries of the first century. . . . This explains why R. T. France was right to call Jesus a radical. If Jesus is the perfect image bearer of God and our exemplar, the real question is: Are we radical enough?”⁵⁸

In looking at gender through the eyes of redemption, one of the most often quoted verses is Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This verse has been called “the most socially explosive statement in the New Testament.”⁵⁹ It is not the present purpose to engage the debate, but to ask the question again about the radical nature of Jesus’ relationship to women.

The Babylonian Talmud includes a morning blessing to be recited by every Jewish man, thanking God for not creating him a gentile, a slave, or a woman (*Menahoth 43b*). While it is not certain that this prayer pre-dates Paul, it demonstrates the power these three categories held in the ancient world. Paul’s declaration that in Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, is a radical dismantling of these primary identity and boundary markers.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*, 31-32.

⁵⁸ James, *Malestrom*, quoting Walter Bruggeman, 177.

⁵⁹ Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?” *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 161.

⁶⁰ Elisabeth Johnson, “Commentary on Galatians 3:23-29,” *Working Preacher*, June 20, 2010, accessed January 15, 2017, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=610.

By example and through His atonement, Jesus embodied and was restoring in humanity the image of God. Surely whatever pertained to justification and standing before God also was meant to be demonstrated in the sanctified lives of His people of every age as they move toward the New Jerusalem. The *imago dei*: male and female is a blessing: “the Blessed Alliance.”⁶¹

Maleness and Femaleness

God made humanity in His image: male and female. It seems simple. However, gender identity in twenty-first century America is anything but simple. Bruce Jenner, the symbol of masculinity from the 1976 Olympics, became Caitlyn Jenner very publicly on the cover of the July 2015 issue of *Vanity Fair*. The acronym LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) has become a cultural recognition of more than two genders. Intersex has become a theological, not just a medical topic, as new books have emerged from the Christian community.⁶²

This challenge to the binary sex system has been accompanied by the challenge to the definition of marriage and the civil rights of partners. On June 26, 2015, homosexual marriage became legal in the United States when the Supreme Court ruled

⁶¹ James, *Half the Church*, 135-150.

⁶² Two of these books are *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015) by Megan K. DeFranza, and *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015) by Mark A. Yarhouse.

state laws prohibiting it were unconstitutional.⁶³ These cases are mentioned to demonstrate the complexity of being created male and female and to call the church to speak knowledgably, pastorally and prophetically to the postmodern world in need of truth in love.

What is maleness and femaleness? Has the church itself caused some of the confusion by rigid categories of what characteristics and roles define masculinity and femininity? Has the church been given an opportunity through the present confusion to regain a prophetic voice to a world in need of God's truth and purpose in creation?

As has been asserted in the previous section, but now with the focus on maleness and femaleness:

God created humanity in his image as male and female. The creation mandate given to the first man and woman called them both to two tasks. They were to procreate . . . and to exercise responsible dominion over every living thing on the earth. Both the man and the women were to engage in the tasks of parenting. Both the man and the woman were to engage in responsible dominion (Gen. 1:28). The focus of Scripture is not on masculinity and femininity. It is on the interdependence of a man and a woman who leave father and mother, cleave to one another, and become one flesh. Whenever we get tangled up in defining the tasks, feelings, or characteristics of what it means to be masculine or feminine, we have shifted from the Bible to the culture for our norms. We have become Constantinian.⁶⁴

Many Christian books, workshops and teachings⁶⁵ attempt to define masculinity and femininity, maleness and femaleness with set characteristics and standards for

⁶³ Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Ruling Makes Same-Sex Marriage a Right Nationwide" *New York Times*, June 26, 2015, accessed December 15, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/27/us/supreme-court-same-sex-marriage.html?_r=0.

⁶⁴ Alice P. Mathews and M. Gay Hubbard, *Marriage Made in Eden: A Post-Christian World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 129.

⁶⁵ Books and teachings in this vein will be mentioned in subsequent paragraphs in this section and include *Total Woman, Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, Wild at Heart, and Captivating*.

biblical manhood and womanhood. The doctrine of the separate spheres in the Victorian Age was a similar construct. "This doctrine supported the idea that men and women possess fundamentally different natures and thus must have completely separate spheres of activity. Men have the skills and temperament for public life, whereas women are designed to be exclusively in the home."⁶⁶ The "true woman" who was to provide a sanctuary away from the competitive world of public life was to "exhibit four cardinal virtues. She was pure, she was pious, she was domestic, and she was submissive."⁶⁷

Marabel Morgan's *Total Woman* published in 1974 and was recognized by Publishers Weekly as the non-fiction top bestseller for that year.⁶⁸ It was the author's experience that it was used for women's studies in many evangelical churches in the 1970s. "A Total Woman caters to her man's special quirks, whether it be in salads, sex or sports," and "It's only when a woman surrenders her life to her husband, reveres and worships him and is willing to serve him, that she becomes really beautiful to him." She devotes an entire chapter to advice on how to greet the husband at the door, including keeping him guessing with different costumes of varying degrees of coverage.⁶⁹

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, in 2001 and 2005 respectively, *Wild at Heart* and *Captivating* by John and Stasi Eldredge appeared to "discover the secret of

⁶⁶ Mathews and Hubbard, 92.

⁶⁷ Mathews and Hubbard, 103.

⁶⁸ Michael Korda, *Making the List: A Cultural History of the American Bestseller 1900-1999* (New York: Barnes & Noble Publishing, Inc., 2001), 157.

⁶⁹ Marabel Morgan, *Total Woman* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1973), 55, 80, 94-97.

the man's soul and unveil the secret of the woman's soul.”⁷⁰ Simply put the man wants: “a battle to fight, a beauty to rescue, and an adventure to live.”⁷¹ “Every woman's three core desires are: to be romanced, to play a role in her own adventures and to display beauty.”⁷²

Whatever century or time period is being referenced, these formulas have not created the harmony intended. Ideal womanhood or manhood has been less than ideal as each pertains to marriage. “The final decades of the Victorian era” produced “a divorce rate exceeding that of the first sixty years of the twentieth century” and “the highest proportion of women who never married between 1835 and the present [1980].”⁷³ That is contrary to popular thought. “Many of us have grown up believing that the doctrine of separate spheres comes straight from the Bible and, if properly applied, will guarantee happiness to husbands and wives. But the historical record forces us to ask if this is true.”⁷⁴ Even with the more recent formulations of manhood and womanhood and all the resources available today, Christian marriages suffer alarming divorce rates.⁷⁵

These formulas often emphasize marriage promoting the idea that a single man

⁷⁰ These are the subtitles of the books *Wild at Heart* and *Captivating* by John and Staci Eldredge.

⁷¹ John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 9-17.

⁷² John and Staci Eldredge, *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 7-19.

⁷³ Mathews and Hubbard 92-93.

⁷⁴ Mathews and Hubbard, 107.

⁷⁵ Glenn Stanton, “FactChecker: Divorce Rates Among Christians,” The Gospel Coalition, September 25, 2012, accessed October 15, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/factchecker-divorce-rate-among-christians>.

or woman is in a less fulfilled state of biblical manhood or womanhood.⁷⁶ The apostle Paul spoke otherwise of that condition that allowed him to focus on the priorities of the Kingdom (I Corinthians 7: 32-35). Jesus, Himself, under this type of scrutiny might fall short of human standards. However, it is clear that He is the only perfect man who has ever lived.

The postmodern age contributes to the confusion in its own way:

The idea of the modern self, characterized by unity, stability, and constancy through time is...being replaced by the postmodern self, a “decentered, fleeting self constructed in each moment of existence”From the postmodern perspective, reluctance to commit to a relationship becomes logical...In the postmodern sense, gender identity (the socially defined sense of being a woman or a man) and sexuality (the biologically based sense of maleness of femaleness) become intrinsic parts of the fleeting self being constructed out of the given moment.”⁷⁷

The church has an opportunity and an obligation to speak into this very fluid, fleeting and unstable atmosphere with the Word of God as eternal, effective and profitable for speaking to any age or generation (1 Timothy 3:16).

Miroslav Volf sheds light on how to speak about gender without the formulas of the past decades. Written for the purpose of looking at otherness and reconciliation in a broader social and global context, Volf uses gender as a case study. He looks to the relationships within the Trinity to glean principles about how men and women were designed to relate to each other. He excludes the gender of language about God as determinative for gender identity since God is Spirit without gender. “If God is

⁷⁶ Rachel Held Evans, “Women of Valor: It’s about Character, Not Roles,” *Rachel Held Evans Blog*, June 11, 2012, accessed January 2, 2017, and Kate Wallace Nunneley, “The Incomplete Gospel of Biblical Womanhood,” The Junia Project, November 18, 2013, accessed January 2, 2017, <http://juniaproject.com/incomplete-gospel-biblical-womanhood/>.

⁷⁷ Mathews and Hubbard, 41.

completely beyond sexual distinctions but our language of God is necessarily gendered, then all *specifically masculine or feminine* content of the language about God *stems exclusively from the creaturely realm* (italics are Wolf's).⁷⁸ He contends this argument goes the wrong direction: from earth to heaven rather than the other way around. "We use masculine or feminine metaphors for God not because God is male or/and female, but because God is 'personal.'"⁷⁹

If neither the models of God nor the explicit statement of the Bible about femininity and masculinity are normative for the content of gender identities, what is? Does anything really go? My proposal is that we locate normativity in the formal features of identity and the character of relations of divine persons. Instead of setting up ideals of femininity and masculinity, *we should root each in the sexed body and let the social construction of gender play itself out guided by the vision of the identity of and relations between divine persons.*⁸⁰

With this in view, Wolf points to "the life of the Trinity characterized by self-giving love" and yet without either "dissolution" or "colonization" of personhood.⁸¹ The idea of the indwelling of the persons of the Trinity in each other is carried out in the genders through what Wolf calls a principle of "not without" or interdependence.⁸² It is on account of self-giving that divine persons exist in a perfect community in which each is inhabited by the others. And it is through the power of self-giving that a new community of men and women will emerge, in which distinct but dynamic gender identities that are

⁷⁸ Wolf, 170.

⁷⁹ Paul K. Jewett and Marguerite Shuster, *God, Creation and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 44ff.

⁸⁰ Wolf, 182.

⁸¹ Wolf, 178, 180.

⁸² Based on Paul's writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, "Neither is woman without man nor man without woman. For just as woman came from man so man comes through woman."

“not without” the other will be fashioned and re-fashioned in peace.”⁸³ A very specific set of characteristics that define maleness and femaleness that often finds its source in culture is a less reliable guide than the truth of God’s intended interdependence of man and woman.

Conclusion

From two people—male and female, it was God’s purpose to create a multitude of people from every language, tribe and nation that would be presented holy before him and live forever with him. Although in view from the beginning, he accomplishes this through time and through the very people he created.

Throughout biblical history, God uses men and women to bring about his purposes. The gifts he gives his church are made explicit in the New Testament, but in both testaments, the manifestation of the gifts are made known as both men and women lead and serve. Especially in Jesus’ interaction with women, the high regard of women is demonstrated in contrast to the cultural dictates of the patriarchy of the Bible.

The nature of the relations of the Trinity is reflected in gendered relationships. One way of evidencing the unity found within the Godhead to a world filled with disunity is authentic loving and mutually respectful gender relationships stemming from the character of the Trinity and through the power of the indwelling Spirit. “God didn’t create a world where one gender can flourish at the expense of the other. In God’s

⁸³ Wolf, 189.

world, the true flourishing of one depends on and promotes the full flourishing of the other. In fact, God's kingdom purposes for the world to hinge on how well we *both* flourish and pull together to serve him.⁸⁴ As both male and female together reflect the image of God, both are to flourish in serving the God who made them.

⁸⁴ James, *Malestrom*, 26-27.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many books are available on the topic of postmodernism and its impact on the American evangelical church, the history and controversy of women in ministry and the hermeneutics and theology behind the controversy. This literature review highlights the books and resources most helpful in analyzing the interdisciplinary intersection of all these.

Postmodernism

A perfect place to start learning about the postmodern age is Peter Berger's "Toward a Critique of Modernity" in the volume *Religion & Sociology of Knowledge*.¹ He is an eminent scholar in the field of sociology of religion. The brief treatise succinctly explores five dilemmas modernity has imposed on man and through that quickly draws a picture of the postmodern world which was created by modernization.

*A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*² is a classic for anyone wanting to understand millennials and how postmodernity has confronted the modern church. Born out of author and pastor Brian McLaren's own deep spiritual struggle and questioning, it illuminates a path for pastors and Christians to engage a spiritual query of their own through an easy-to-read engaging tale. It is a book for parents and grandparents to understand the culture of their children and grandchildren.

¹ Peter L. Berger, "Toward a Critique of Modernity," in *Religion & the Sociology of Knowledge*, Barbara Hargrove, ed. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984).

² Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2001).

Although it is really a philosophical treatise, it reads like a novel about a disillusioned pastor's relationship and dialogue about faith with his daughter's high school teacher. The dialogues often contain detailed charts and can be lifted out of the story for the use of teaching. These charts and illustrations in the book are helpful. Also valuable is Alan Roxburgh's process of paradigm change in the "Introduction."³ It brings into clear focus that the impact of postmodernism on the church is not just an abstract philosophical issue of interest to scholars but to all who care about the faith being passed from generation to generation.⁴

If the reader is looking for humor and wit, James Smith makes a hard subject easier in his *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*.⁵ This very readable and affable book gives an accessible approach to understanding the French influence on the beginnings of postmodern thought.

Although Smith recognizes the dissonance of postmodern philosophy to historic Christianity, he does not see postmodernism as an evil incarnate. He states that his goal in writing the book "is to demythologize postmodernism by showing that what we commonly think so-called postmodernists are saying is usually not the case. Second, and perhaps more provocatively, I will demonstrate that, in fact, all these claims have a

³ McLaren, x. According to Roxburgh, the process of paradigm change follows five phases: stability, discontinuity, disembedding, transition and reformation.

⁴ It is interesting to note that Brian McLaren, one of the key leaders in the emerging church is also connected to the Terranova Theology Project, an initiative within Leadership Network to explore how Christian faith will reconfigure in the postmodern matrix.

⁵ James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

deep affinity with central Christian claims.”⁶ He believes that postmodernity provides “an opportunity for rethinking the shape of our churches” and “can be an occasion for a recovery of ancient Christian themes and sources because the critique of modernity reopens a significant role for tradition.”⁷

If pastors are looking for a popular rather than an academic resource volume on the cultural shift, *Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations working together in the 12 Places They Come Apart*.⁸ Author Haydn Shaw looks at postmodernism from the viewpoint of generations working together in the business world—a practical rather than an historical, biblical or theological one. It is helpful in that it speaks of the cultural shift detailed by other books in very practical terms of how the generations differ and what they can learn from each other.

His charts clearly detail the generational shifts over the past decades (See Appendix A). They provide explanation and guidance for churches as well as businesses.

Evangelical Church in the United States

The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World is a well-researched volume and a rich resource to return to again and again. Sally Morgenthaler calls it “the best primer on the emerging church that I have seen.”⁹ Webber’s research

⁶ Smith, 22.

⁷ Smith, 9 and 109.

⁸ Haydn Shaw, *Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013).

⁹ Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), back cover.

among the young evangelicals adds grassroots authenticity to the extensive bibliography.

The division and chapter titles in the table of contents as well as the nineteen tables spread throughout the book provide a good summary of his thesis that he states in his “Introduction.” “This is a book about an emerging generation of leaders, the younger evangelicals. It is also a book about all evangelicals because it tells the story of evangelical roots in the twentieth century and how and why evangelicalism in the next century will be different.”¹⁰ The explanation of the modern church in its traditional and pragmatic forms is invaluable and sheds light on the need for change.

Webber’s purpose is not directed toward the women’s issue but he does give attention to the path that led to the formation of Christians for Biblical Equality.¹¹ Some of the many tables throughout the book also show a movement toward mutuality.¹²

*Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*¹³ by the same author covers the same ground in many ways but from a wider historical scope. Its value lies in the foundational work of understanding postmodernism and its comparisons with previous eras. As in *The Younger Evangelicals*, Webber’s tables are helpful in organizing and simplifying dense subject matter. In them, he compares the postmodern paradigm to all the previous paradigms of history: ancient (100-600),

¹⁰ Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 13.

¹¹ Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 39.

¹² Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 122-23.

¹³ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

medieval (600-1500), reformation (1500-1750), modern (1750-1980) so as to locate its niche in the parade of history. Especially helpful is the explanation of paradigm thinking.

This brief overview of the major Christian paradigms introduces us to a key element of postmodern thought: paradigm thinking. First, paradigm thinking asks us to understand the past contextually. Each epoch of Christian history is to be studied in its own culture. Since its beginning, the Christian faith has been filtered through a variety of cultures. In each of these cultures Christianity has been primarily communicated through one or more dominating principles. Thus, it may be said broadly that the story of Christianity moves from a focus on mystery in the classical period, to institution in the medieval era, to individualism in the Reformation era, to reason in the modern era, and now, in the postmodern era, back to mystery.¹⁴

*Christianity After Religion: The End of the Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*¹⁵ is an engaging, well-written volume of history, hope and statistics that show sociological and cultural trends. Diana Butler Bass provides a good backdrop that combined with other histories helps to illustrate that the present seismic cultural shift brings with it the great potential of rebuilding the future. Her thesis is that a new spirituality is on its way—another great awakening.

*The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*¹⁶ is an excellent overview of history written by respected author Phyllis Tickle. Influenced by her career as the founding editor of the Religion Department of *Publishers Weekly*, she demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of sources. Her association with the

¹⁴ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 16.

¹⁵ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012).

¹⁶ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008).

emergent church gives it a different slant from others describing the same set of historical, sociological and cultural features.

The quadrilateral illustration¹⁷ with accompanying explanation in Part Three of the book brings some cohesive theory to the present scene. The initial quadrilateral expands progressively to illustrate her theory of the future.

Rah's *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*¹⁸ is written through a non-western lens and sheds light on the American evangelical church. Potent, invigorating and sometimes biting, Rah brings attention to the fact that his strong challenge about race often mirrors the need for a change in vision for the evangelical church vis-à-vis women. In the "Introduction" he makes a confession: "A significant oversight that will be confessed from the onset is that, in our focus on the issue of race in this work, we will not invest the necessary time and effort to discuss the white *male* captivity of the American evangelical church. We must recognize, however, that the issue of gender captivity also plays a prominent role in the cultural captivity of the church."¹⁹ Rah offers a voice that is enlightening, humbling and stirring.

Rah's chapter entitled "The Emergent Church's Captivity to Western, White Culture"²⁰ is especially worthwhile. His bibliography offers diverse resources not

¹⁷ Tickle, 126.

¹⁸ Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Rah, 22.

²⁰ Rah, 108.

mentioned in other books. He makes a point that in advocating for social justice within the church, one needs to have eyes open to all kinds of oppression that offend God, not being selective to the one that causes the personal offense.

Women (and Men) in the Church

Although not a distinctly Christian book nor on the subject of women in the church, *Half the Sky*²¹ offers a worldwide vision for women. This volume, written by a journalist couple, builds necessary moral outrage concerning gender injustice and lays down the challenge for remedy for the developing world. It was groundbreaking in unveiling the worldwide scandal of gender oppression in its many different cultural expressions.

The book also builds an understanding of the intensity of the oppression of women by men. In order to understand the evil of any expression of gender oppression whether mild or extreme, one must look at the global picture to engage the nature and the scope of the infection of hatred that lies at the bottom of it.

Carolyn Custis James ushers the global struggle against gender injustice into the church. The “Introduction” to *Half the Church*²² explains that the original intent of her book was to bring within one volume the biblical truths that had been expounded about God’s vision for women in her previous books. Her exposition of woman as ezer-warrior,

²¹ Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009). The title reflects the Chinese proverb “Women hold up half the sky.” Its truth demonstrates the importance of the male/female dynamic in the world generally, as well as the church specifically. If the church is to impact society and the world, it must embody oneness in Christ.

²² Carolyn Custis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God’s Global Vision for Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011). The “Introduction” begins on page 17.

her teaching on male and female created *imago dei*, the coinage of the terminology of “the Blessed Alliance” as the design God has for men and women together, are all consolidated in this one volume to produce a biblical theology of women.

God’s vision for us doesn’t just reassure us that we matter and that our lives do count for something. God’s vision compels us to look beyond ourselves, to ponder a picture of how things were meant to be that leaves us aching for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, and to look for ways to participate in moving the world toward that goal.²³

In *Malestrom*,²⁴ she demonstrates the need for a change in vision for both men and women personally, then together in the church. She shows what is at stake if this is not engaged. She calls for an end to a patriarchy that has diminished not only women, but men as well and ultimately the church.

*Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World*²⁵ is an interdisciplinary volume intersecting theology, sociology, psychology, history and culture in revealing God’s design for marriage compared to the state of marriage in North America today. The reasons behind the state of marriage today are linked to cultural expressions of the philosophy prevailing in various epochs. It brings clarity to some of the very issues faced about the partnership of men and women by demythologizing the history of the Victorian Age regarded as idyllic. Especially helpful is the discussion of The Doctrine of Separate Spheres and accompanying definition of a

²³ James, *Half the Church*, 25.

²⁴ Carolyn Custis James, *The Malestrom: Manhood Swept into the Currents of a Changing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

²⁵ Alice P. Mathews and M. Gay Hubbard, *Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004).

True Woman. The chapter entitled “The Myth of the Victorian Ideal”²⁶ is eye opening and informative of gender hostility that grew because of cultural rather than biblical gender expectations. Since the thesis travels the same path with a focus on women in ministry, the analysis was invaluable.

The chapter “New Wineskins for New Wine” with its discussion of hierarchy in marriage mirrors the discussion of male hierarchy in history and in certain churches today. The focus on missional marriage as God’s purpose emphasizes that the union is a divine, not human design with implications for the well-being of the couple as well as their testimony in the community. These themes are resonant with the themes in the thesis about mutuality and the picture of God portrayed to the community by the health of male-female relationships in the church.

A new book *Gender Roles and the People of God*²⁷ written as a textbook speaks cogently to the subject of the thesis especially as it pertains to God’s original design for man and woman in creation and the exercise of that design throughout history in a fallen world. Mathews demonstrates the waxing and waning of the design through various periods of history. An excellent chapter on the nature of ministry as it pertains to men and women’s roles concludes with this statement: “The nature of ministry is that we come together, each serving with the gifts God has given us, to build God’s church on earth. We do violence to God’s plan - the Blessed Alliance - when we construct a

²⁶ Mathews and Hubbard, 91-107.

²⁷ Alice P. Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

gender-based hierarchy elevating men over women when the two were created to work side by side as equals.”²⁸

In *Woman as a Force in History*,²⁹ Mary Beard, a suffragette, gives an account of the strong impact of women on civilization throughout history. In addition to being a historian and archivist in her own right, she was a collaborator on the works of her husband Charles A. Beard, eminent historian.

Biblical and Theological Study

Phillip Payne’s *One in Christ*³⁰ is well-researched and thorough—a valuable reference for anyone making a serious study of the difficult New Testament passages concerning the role of women in the church and the home. His linguistic, cultural, and theological labor on the I Timothy 2 passage was what tipped the scale in favor of a non-hierarchical complementarian view for the author of the thesis. A lack of thorough and excellent hermeneutical work has often been cited as a weakness of the egalitarian position. This work and others studied in preparation for this thesis demonstrate the opposite.

²⁸ Alice P. Mathews, although this quote was not included in the final version of *Gender Roles and the People of God*, it was included in the conclusion of Chapter 10 of the original manuscript.

²⁹ Mary R. Beard, *Woman as Force in History* (New York: Collier Books, 1946).

³⁰ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

Stanley Grenz' *Women in the Church*, written "by evangelicals primarily for evangelicals"³¹ provides a rich and solid historical, biblical and theological exploration of the controversial topic of women's ordination. The authors have managed a thorough, clear, well-outlined and well-articulated overview of the complementarian-egalitarian debate. Although they boldly declare their egalitarian viewpoint repeatedly, the argument is fair to both vantage points and the spirit is irenic. The works cited are extensive and well-chosen with the result of providing an incisive look at the decades of controversy and the development of the argument.

The order of the chapters, the precision of theological language and the development of an overall eschatological vision for mutuality in God's redeemed community create a picture of God's intention and desired goal and the struggle meanwhile on earth to achieve it. The value of the book lies in its succinct review of historical and hermeneutical sources along with the scholarship of the arguments. In many books of this nature, the main argument is for the inclusion of women. That case is certainly made in this volume, but it is refreshing to see the impassioned plea is for something much greater: the realization of God's program purposed before the foundation of the world with mutuality as a natural by-product.

*Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*³² is a fair-minded and irenic book in its treatment of current controversial issues of women and homosexuality. William Webb gives a clear approach to the redemptive-

³¹ Stanley J. Grenz, with Denise Muir Kyesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 17.

³² William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

movement hermeneutic by taking slavery as a test case to illustrate the controversial topics of women and homosexuals. He then explores how the culture of the biblical text interfaces with the proximate culture or how decisions are made about what is cultural or transcultural. Webb applies himself to demonstrating the cultural analysis without losing the “spirit of the text.”³³ He brings to bear the ultimate culture of the new humanity in the new heavens and the new earth unleashing the redemptive movement of Scripture. Through his cultural analysis, Webb demonstrates the difference in these two people groups by defining what is cultural and what is transcultural.

“Gender Identity,”³⁴ a pivotal chapter out of Miroslav Wolf’s larger book *Exclusion & Embrace* is theologically dense, but incisive on reconciliation and social justice issues. Wolf uses this chapter as a test case for his entire book. He asserts that the mutual indwelling of the Godhead (*perichoresis*) is the model for the relationship between male and female. His solution of “embrace” rather than “exclusion” is powerful in the discussion of fleshing out the new human community powered by the Spirit.³⁵

Conclusion

To treat the topic of women in ministry in the twenty-first century with a focus on mutuality requires an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore the books drawn from

³³ Webb, 248.

³⁴ Miroslav Wolf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 167-190.

³⁵ Wolf, back cover. In his endorsement, Jurgen Moltmann says that the book is “biblically grounded and future-oriented to a new human community. It is a great witness to the God who forgives and does not remember forever, creating a new community out of enemies.”

the philosophical and cultural perspective provided a picture of the significant shift from the last half of the twentieth century to the twenty-first century, namely a critique of modernity and its successor postmodernity. Since postmodernity is inherently “post-truth”³⁶ and Christianity proclaims truth, research in books discussing the impact of postmodernity on the church were necessarily included. Scant attention in these books was paid to the question of the impact of this cultural shift on the relationships of men and women in ministry, so books specifically on the topic of men and women in the church provided another layer. Consideration of what God’s design for man and woman is in creation, redemption and consummation demanded the biblical and theological exploration as the bedrock. The interdisciplinary study revealed a basis for arguing that the deconstruction of postmodernism opens the door for reconstruction of the evangelical church in some positive paths. The recapturing of the ancient faith and a reforming of structures provide a pathway toward increased mutuality and the partnership of men and women in the Gospel mission.

³⁶ Ravi Zacharias, “Why Oxford Dictionary’s 2016 Word of the Year Matters,” The Gospel Coalition: Arts & Culture, December 21, 2016, accessed February 11, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-oxford-dictionrys-2016-word-of-the-year-matters>.

CHAPTER FOUR PROJECT DESIGN

As has already been stated, the purpose of this thesis project is to demonstrate that postmodernity is a pathway that God is using in restoring his original design for men and women to build God's kingdom together by reforming the U. S. evangelical church. The proliferation of numerous women's ministries during the last two decades that are engaging women in a way that the modern church does not suggests that they have a secret to be explored.¹ The project attempts to uncover what these ministries have discovered about moving from a modern to a postmodern approach as it pertains to mutuality.

The project has been a moving target for two reasons.² First, the world is changing at a rapid rate. These ministries continue to appear annually exposing a new development to investigate. Second, the author is changing. A baby boomer attempting to serve God in a postmodern world, the shift has been uncomfortable. Third, the original design of the project was the development of an instrument to be used in a series of interviews with targeted women leaders. What began as a simple semi-structured interview evolved into an almost two-year investigation. The questions of the semi-structured interview focused on the structures and strategy of ministry shifting due to the cultural shift of postmodernity. However, as the project evolved, a focus of

¹ Kate Shellnutt, "The Bigger Story Behind Jen Hatmaker," *Christianity Today*, November 15, 2016, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/november-web-only/bigger-story-behind-jen-hatmaker.html>. This is brought again to the reader's attention since it gives an incisive analysis of the strong influence of these ministry leaders on women in local churches.

² See Appendix D.

mutuality surfaced. So, the focus of the project itself shifted. The interviews gave insight in the shift of the structures and strategies, but that shift also gave rise to a more refined focus. This shift will be reflected in the outcomes in Chapter Five.

First Step: Develop the Formal Research Instrument

Qualitative research is often best carried out with a series of open-ended questions posed to each person being interviewed. This first step thus began with the development of those questions and then receiving the feedback of Dr. Bryan Auday and the approval of the GCTS Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. See Appendix E for the approval documents and the approved list of twelve questions to be used in the interviews. The twelve standard questions posed were:

1. Why and when did your ministry start?
2. What distinguishes your ministry from other current women's ministries?
3. Do you partner with any other ministries? Are you associated with a certain church or denomination? Why or why not?
4. How is your ministry structured? What is its vision and mission? What are your strategies? How are you funded?
5. Who is the target audience and do you have current demographics?
6. Are you conscious of ministering to the "postmodern" woman? How does that differ from any previous ministry strategies?
7. Could you comment on the importance of technology to your ministry?
8. Given your own understanding of postmodernism, how would you describe its impact on the vision and mission of your ministry?
9. What have you found to be the most important model(s) for ministering to women today?
10. What do you think are the unique opportunities the church has today? What unique opportunities do postmodern women have?
11. Could you recommend any articles or books that have influenced the development of this ministry or that you find helpful in understanding ministry to women in this current cultural context?
12. Would you like me to know anything else about the ministry?

Second Step: Select and Invite Ministry Leaders for Interviews

Many women's ministries exist but the ones chosen were selected on the basis of their inception in the postmodern era, their mission, their scope and reach, the scope of their target audience and their rapid growth. The author's exposure to ministries in general and reliance on a broad network of ministry leaders provided a list of ministries from which eleven leaders were chosen. One was non-responsive after initial contact and was eliminated. Another was not able to participate fully. All ministries could be identified as resource ministries that serve the church, organizations and individuals. None of them are postmodern in the sense of a belief that there is no absolute truth or overarching metanarrative; they are all evangelical. The oldest was founded in 1988 (Christians for Biblical Equality) and the youngest in 2015 (Propel Women) placing them all within the postmodern era and therefore ministering to a postmodern culture. This intentional selection aided in exploring the impact of postmodernism on the church as it relates to mutuality.

An explanation of the types of ministries represented will clarify some differences as well as similarities. Three of them are a part of a bigger organization (Synergy within Missio Alliance, The Gospel Coalition Women within The Gospel Coalition and Q Women within QIdeas). Two of them (Hope Gathering and Marcella Project) are more locally focused but most have a global impact. Junia Project is an online network of men and women. Some of the ministries are larger in scope than training and resourcing women. See Appendix F for list of the ministries researched.

In addition to interviews of leaders representing the ministries, two additional leaders were interviewed. One was a prolific woman author who had written a volume on the postmodern cultural shift and its impact on the church. The other was a man from one of the larger ministries which had adopted one of the women's ministries. There two were added for perspective.

Third Step: Explore the Relevant Websites to Understand the Ministries

In preparation for the interviews, the researcher explored the websites of the leaders' ministries to understand the nature of the ministry and discern their online strategies. Informal charts compared the ministries in order to see similarities and differences as well as to observe any trends. Over a period of almost two years, the websites were tracked to see new initiatives and any evolution in the ministries. When offered, subscription to newsletters or automatic ministry-alerts were requested for the purpose of a continual observation of ministry movement and direction. For a list of these websites, see Appendix G.

Fourth Step: Conduct Interviews with Ministry Leaders

After the ministries and the leaders were identified, an email interview request was sent to each accompanied by the one-page document identifying the expectations and the process. A follow-up phone call took place in some cases for further explanation. Upon the leaders' agreement for an interview, the consent form was sent

for signature. In most cases, the leaders were interested in the project and more than happy to participate. In all, seven of these leaders were interviewed.

In the course of the reading for the thesis, two female authors whose books demonstrated immense familiarity with the history of postmodernism and women's issues were asked for interviews as well. One accepted and agreed to an in-person interview which was conducted over lunch in the home of the researcher.

After all the interviews had been conducted, it was determined that in light of the topic, a male leader should be interviewed. Since one of the women's ministries had been adopted into a larger organization whose leaders were male, one of the men was sent a request for a phone interview, which he accepted.

The same standard questions were asked in all interviews except the last two. Other follow-up questions were posed based on their answers. The interviews were scheduled for an hour. Some were abbreviated due to the schedule of the leader. Others exceeded the hour limit due to a discussion about ministry.

The initial goal was to record all interviews and transcribe them verbatim. That occurred in two cases. However, technical issues with the recording device or with Skype made that impossible. In those cases, detailed notes were taken which were typed out and sent to the person interviewed for editing and approval. In one case, the person interviewed preferred to send in written answers to the questions due to a schedule that did not allow for a personal interview.

As the project ensued, the interviewer gained skill and insight and the interviews yielded more pointed and helpful information. It was often the case that both

interviewer and the one interviewed gained insights together with shared information and a shared passion for the movement of the Spirit in the present age.

Fifth Step: Evaluate Ministry through Conference Attendance and Observation

When possible, the author attended conferences to observe and experience firsthand the structure, content and spirit of training and connection. Another value of the onsite observation was to get an actual visual of the demographic and gain insight from the attendees. Of equal interest was the desire to observe accompanying features such as mission projects, bookstores, and ministry booths. A final value was to experience the leadership style of the founders and learn the thrust of the message from the topic and speaker selection.

In all, the author attended eleven multi-day conferences or one-day events, one by live stream. A list of these is to be found in Appendix H.

Sixth Step: Present Ministry Findings in Formal and Informal Settings

The original thesis project proposal contained no presentation of ministry findings to a scheduled group. However, over the course of the project duration, many opportunities arose to present data and anecdotal material to groups in formal and informal settings. These meetings provided interaction that validated the findings of the research. Among the formal settings were a continuing education lecture at a university, three local church's women's conferences and a pastoral panel at the Redeeming Sex Seminar sponsored by one of the researched ministries. Among the informal settings

were pastors, women's ministries directors, and two local church discipleship groups. A listing of these is to be found in Appendix I.

Final Step: Final Analysis and Conclusions

A massive amount of data resulted from the almost two-year process. The author created informal charts to analyze and synthesize the material to form themes. The process also included a comparison of what was discovered to what was gleaned through the literature review. Throughout the two-year research period, through prayer and meditation the author sought God's help in discerning between what was essential and what was merely interesting. While the findings brought the author a step closer to fulfilling doctoral thesis requirements, more importantly, they formed the basis for furthering professional ministry in the present and future in a postmodern age. Chapter Five will present the final analysis and conclusions from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES

This thesis-project was begun to show the impact that the postmodern cultural shift had on the U. S. evangelical church in the area of women in ministry—its structures and strategies. Rather than research the denominational or local church, the project focused on those ministries founded within the early years of the postmodern age outside the structure of the inherited church. As research ensued in both the literature as well as in the interview process, the focus of the project shifted to mutuality. The cultural shift into the postmodern age with a millennial generation has caused the inherited church to undergo introspection and self-assessment. The postmodern global context forces the church to admit the worldwide problem of the oppression of women. The thesis is positing the theory that this cultural shift is being used by God to advance the original design of mutuality in the Blessed Alliance.

Process of Analyzing the Data¹

The data corpus for this thesis-project consists of nine semi-structured interviews, the study and comparison of the websites of the ministries researched and the observations gleaned by attendance at eleven conferences/seminars/events sponsored by seven of the nine ministries. The transcribed interviews (either from recordings or notes and approved by those interviewed) were read and re-read for the

¹ The method for analyzing the data followed closely the steps suggested by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke in “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” published in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (July 21, 2008): 77-101.

discovery of themes. All the interviews except one were of leaders associated with the nine ministries being researched. The other interview was of an author who had written on the subject of the impact of postmodernism on the church. Themes were coded. The websites were analyzed by creating a table comparing dates of inception, reasons for creation, mission and vision statements, leadership structure and demographics, target audience and its scope, and strategies employed. Observations from the conferences were documented and compared according to conference themes, agendas, plenary speakers, workshops and focus groups (if applicable), audience demographics, diversity in speakers and audience, presence of a mission project, bookstore or other auxiliary features. Findings from interviews, websites and conferences were cross-referenced for the themes that are included in the conclusions.

The analysis of the actual interviews conducted for this thesis-project resulted in three most often mentioned themes: the desire for the normality of mutuality or inclusiveness pertaining to gender as a picture of God's design (16 mentions); the need for community—in local contexts, between women leaders, within diverse groups as an expression of God's kingdom, and as a global community (11 mentions), and the recognition of the value of diversity with regard to gender, race, class, generation, denomination to reflect the world and the kingdom (10 mentions). Analyzing the websites and the conferences proved more difficult due to the differences in objectives of the ministries. However, some unified themes also arose: the importance of and dependence on technology and social media, the priority of resources for education and

in some cases re-education, the necessity of conversations about cultural issues, and a focus on justice and social action.

Conclusions Determined From Analysis

The following conclusions were derived by integrating the themes mentioned above and considering what the synthesis of those themes suggested.

The “Old Wineskins” Are Not Sufficiently Flexible To Contain the “New Wine”²

As in previous reformations, existing structures modify to allow transformation.

The Old Testament structures of Judaism could not contain the first century church. For his followers, Jesus' sacrifice as the High Priest made the temple and sacrificial system irrelevant for the atonement of sin by providing a sacrifice once and for all (Hebrews 10: 5-10, 18-22). In the sixteenth century, the “new wine” of the Protestant faith could not be contained within the “old wineskins” of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

As noted in the first chapter of this thesis, postmodernism has caused another deconstruction. A reconstruction is taking place. It appears that to embody the value of diversity, the more homogenous evangelical church must form coalitions and alliances. This also provides a communal experience for people of diverse races, denominations with both men and women included joining together around a common purpose.

² Matthew 9:17, Luke 5:37 and Mark 2:22 all record Jesus' acknowledgement that new wine would burst old wineskins. In the note for Matthew 9:16-17, the ESV Study Bible comments: "Rather than patching up the traditional practices of righteousness within religious Judaism, Jesus has come to offer real growth in kingdom righteousness, which is like **when new wine is put into fresh wineskins.**" This is used metaphorically in this thesis to suggest that the structures and strategies which facilitated ministry in the modern age will not hold the changes ushered in due to the shifts in the postmodern age.

The Gospel Coalition and **Missio Alliance** serve churches across denominational lines in ways traditionally served by denominations: leadership development, resources, missional collaboration, strategic dialogue, as well as national, regional and international meetings. Although not as quasi-denominational, **Q** and **Q Women** serve the purpose of bringing together church and cultural leaders across seven channels³ of cultural influence. **Christians for Biblical Equality, IF,** and **Propel Women** have local and global chapters. **Hope Gathering** is localized in New York City but has partnered with city churches across a denominational spectrum with a diverse female audience. Their annual gathering provides simultaneous translation in Spanish and Mandarin encouraging participation among those who might be precluded due to language skills.

Gender diversity is also important. Considering mutuality, some of the comments made by those interviewed⁴ reflect the importance of this gendered partnership to the ministry.

- Speaking of the growth of conference attendance at the original Q Conference on issues of critical thinking, W1, said, “Each year, we gradually added more and more women. We wanted to make it clear that this conversation was for everyone. So each year more and more women began to come and we had more women presenters on stage. We worked very hard to have voices for men and women.” Eventually, it was determined that a separate conference for women was needed to address the issue of identity and purpose: Q Women was founded.
- W2 said, “One of the joys of involvement in my ministry is a broad range of connection with ministries, organizations, and denominations. My speaking engagements take me to a variety of gatherings and churches . . . I work mainly with women (although I speak to some mixed groups in

³ Q, “Seven Channels,” accessed September 1, 2016, <http://qideas.org>. The seven channels are: Church, Business, Education, Social Sector, Arts and Entertainment, Government and Media.

⁴ All comments listed in this section are taken from the semi-structured interviews. The recorded interviews were transcribed. One interview was received in written form. The others were written from notes and approved by those interviewed for the sake of integrity.

schools and various seminars) – and this includes women of various ages and contexts.”

- In speaking of the postmodern context for ministry, W3 asserted, “We realize that many women’s issues are not addressed from the pulpit and we want to give women hope in areas of shame and struggle.”
- W5 spoke of the centrality of the message of her ministry, “Our target audience is those women and men who want to develop critical thinking around the topic of mutuality. . . .we seek to transform the way women view themselves and the way the faith community views women, so that the Church can change what’s happening to women and girls around the globe.
- W7 articulating the distinctive nature of her ministry stated, “We are not a women’s ministry; we are a community of men and women. One half of our writers are men and thirty-five percent of our men are pastors or denominational leaders. . . .Our strategy consists of normalizing an egalitarian presence on social media.” In speaking of the opportunity the church has in the postmodern world, she declared, “the church could be what it was created to be—a place of mutuality, an amazing place for humans to thrive!”
- A prolific author who has written about the emerging church, W8, said, “I think we are in a time of huge shift on gender things. . . .I think the inherited church is in the way, but these ministries you researched are an accommodation by devout Christians to deal with the problem—to try to get the conversation out there and to help us heal both as a society and as a religion.” She further added that she saw the ministries researched in this thesis-project as “signs of emergence.”
- M1 who spoke about his organization and the fact it absorbed the Synergy ministry, said “The partnership of men and women is a theological conviction and at the heart of our DNA. . . .We saw an opportunity in taking Synergy into our structure to give a strong voice to the mutuality of men and women. . . .The Synergy board saw this as an answer to prayer since it gave greater force to their message of the Blessed Alliance.”

The new wineskins are not limited to ministries, coalitions and alliances outside the church,⁵ but they are part of the new ecclesiastical garb of the postmodern age.

Webber describes this adeptly:

⁵ Phyllis Tickle dedicates an entire section of *The Great Emergence* to conclusions drawn about the future of various kinds of church traditions, 119-165.

The current dilemma of twentieth-century modern evangelicalism is that the twentieth-century cultural paradigm in which the evangelical faith was explained, proclaimed, and defended has come to an end. Because culture is in a new paradigm, the old wineskins are collapsing. It is not the faith that needs to be changed but the paradigm or the wineskin in which Christianity is communicated. The current transition from the old to the new paradigm has created a great deal of dissonance and confusion.⁶

The new wineskins do reflect the values of diversity and community indicative of the younger evangelicals. This present work is not suggesting that denominational life is irrelevant, but that the formation of these new wineskins indicates that something is missing from what denominations provide. It is a challenge for the church. Beyond that, there is a hopeful sign that the root of the problem in gender attitudes is being addressed by a number of these ministries. The acknowledgement of the need to focus on issues unique to women and how they view themselves empowers women in the pew to a Christ-centered identity with a sense of purpose. Addressing issues of how the community views women and promoting the Blessed Alliance gives life to the vision God had from the beginning.

Education and Re-Education Is of Primary Importance

One major priority evidenced in a number of the groups is a re-education on what it means to be made in the image of God as a female.⁷ One author interviewed, W8, said, “I think Satan is at the crux in breaking the image of God.” Whether a result of

⁶ Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 15.

⁷ In 2017 Zondervan is publishing a textbook based on Dr. Alice Mathews’ Doctor of Ministry track at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Her book *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* will appear in 2017. This book is cited in this work pre-publication.

lack of encouragement, overt teaching from culture or the church, family of origin, or life's experience, women often struggle with a sense of confidence in their identity as Christian women.⁸ **Synergy, IF, Propel, Q Women, and The Marcella Project** are helping women see themselves as leaders and influencers gifted by God with purpose in the home, the church, and the world.

Carolyn Custis James' encourages women to take seriously that they are theologians. Understanding firsthand what the Bible has to say about their identity has had a large impact.⁹ She has promoted women going beyond being "received knowers" to being "constructed knowers."¹⁰ Through the **Synergy** conferences, her books, website, and speaking ministry, women have been introduced to the idea of being created in the image of God as an *ezer* to be a partner in the Blessed Alliance. As a Leading Voice¹¹ of **Missio Alliance**, she continues to see the impact of teaching this message of encouragement to women. The mission statements of other ministries demonstrate the importance of this corrective in the identity of women:

IF exists to gather, equip and unleash the next generation of women to live out

⁸ Sarah Bessey, "The Invisible Generation," *Christianity Today*, July 2013, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2013/july/ignored-grey-haired-christians.html>.

⁹ Personal communication received frequently over the past years after James' speaking engagements.

¹⁰ Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986, reprint 1997), 15. See Appendix J. James encourages women to study Scriptures and think for themselves on the subject of the roles of women rather than adopt someone else's opinion.

¹¹ The Leading Voices are seasoned theological men and women practitioners who have moved their online writing presence to the Missio Alliance website. They are recognized as trusted and influential Christian leaders whose voices are helping shape the issues and conversations of today.

their purpose.¹²

Q Women asks women to step fearlessly into the life God's already prepared for them to renew cultures, not just individuals.¹³

Propel Women exists to help activate, connect, and equip women from all spheres of life to fulfill their God-given passion, potential, and purpose.¹⁴

The Marcella Project reshapes the way women view themselves and the way the faith community views women, so that the Church can change what's happening to women and girls around the globe.¹⁵

Hope Gathering empowers women to take practical steps in becoming agents of hope in the city, the neighborhood, the office and the family.¹⁶

Although **Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE)** and **The Gospel Coalition (TGC)** are very different in their view on women's roles in the church and home, they both have an extensive domestic and international audience and have a priority on education and developing men and women. However, **CBE** is egalitarian and **TGC** is complementarian.

CBE "exists to promote biblical justice and community by educating Christians

¹² "Who We Are," If Gathering, accessed September 25, 2016, <https://ifgathering.com/who-we-are/>.

¹³ The website for Q Women no longer exists, but this was a stated goal for the ministry when the previous website was accessed September 16, 2016. The Qideas website has been renovated and does include an reference to the 2014 and 2015 QWomen's events under past events, <http://qideas.org>, accessed January 30, 2017.

¹⁴ Propel Women, "Home," accessed September 16, 2016, <http://www.propelwomen.org>.

¹⁵ Marcella Project, The Mission: The Ministry," accessed September 16, 2016, <http://www.marcellaproject.com>.

¹⁶ Hope Gathering, "Home," accessed September 16, 2016, <http://www.hopegathering.com/welcome/>. Language has changed to: "We are a diverse group of women — from different churches, ethnicities and boroughs — who gather together to seek hope in Jesus for our lives and for our city."

that the Bible calls women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world.”¹⁷

In contrast, the confessional statement of **TGC** regarding the nature of creation makes clear a complementarian conviction.

In God’s wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. . . . The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.¹⁸

The statement does include the conviction of developing women to their full potential: “In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God.” The bi-annual exegetical conferences and the resources for women demonstrate the desire to see women biblically grounded and able to teach.

Their emphasis on the importance of women being discipled to know and live out their purpose demonstrates their belief that women’s participation in the Gospel ministry is mission-critical to the church. The ministries researched see their role in supporting, not usurping the role of the local church. The **IF Gathering** website includes this statement: “We believe in the universal Church, expressed through local bodies of believers, as the primary means of faithful expression to God. We are passionate about

¹⁷ “About: CBE’s Mission,” Christians for Biblical Equality, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/cbes-mission>.

¹⁸ “Foundation Documents,” D.A. Carson and Timothy J. Keller, eds., The Gospel Coalition, accessed October 1, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/confessional-statement>.

creating resources and tools to serve the church as they serve women around the world.

. . . We dream of women in every city using their gifts to make God's name great in their communities.”¹⁹ A leader from a different ministry shared a similar thought in her interview:

How crucial for the church to be raising up strong women of the Word—women who know it, love it, declare it, and live it. What that means, of course, is that we want to be raising up women who shine forth Jesus, the one who shines from all kinds of ways. We need an increasing number of godly models who can encourage women to handle and communicate God's Word with clarity and humble strength in all the contexts of our lives.²⁰

It was especially this conclusion that resonated with individuals and groups of women with whom the research of this project was shared (See Appendix I). Most of the women were unaware of the sociological, historical and theological background pertaining to issues of mutuality. A number had attended **TGC** conferences and regularly accessed their resources. Many women had read Carolyn Custis James' books and spoke of a paradigm shift through her teaching on the *ezer* and the Blessed Alliance. About seventy-five percent had no understanding of the terms complementarian and egalitarian. When instructed, they had a preference, but could not argue it theologically.

Christians for Biblical Equality provides valuable resources through their website and through membership. The quarterly journal *Mutuality*, the academic voice *Priscilla Papers* and the blog *Arise* feature both men and women writers on a host of helpful topics pertaining to mutuality. Equally helpful are the number of articles found on **The Junia Project** website. **Marcella Project** convenes an annual Summit of men and

¹⁹ “Who We Are,” IF Gathering, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://ifgathering.com/who-we-are/>.

²⁰ Excerpted from the interview with W2.

women. "We provide a safe place to wrestle with key Scriptures, learn from Bible scholars, engage others in dialogue, figure out how it looks in practical terms, and learn how to articulate God's truth about men and women. Regardless of where we land, we desire to gather, learn together, engage in healthy dialogue, and leave better equipped to live in blessed alliance."²¹ The 2017 theme is "Men and Women: Making The New Normal Together."

The inherited church has not done an adequate job of teaching on these issues and the ministries researched are attempting to provide that teaching. As one ministry leader interviewed attested, "The idea is to help women to think more critically about a number of current questions. Rather than just accept someone else's thinking, the goal is to teach them how to think for themselves."²²

Technology Provides an Unprecedented Platform and Reach for Women

Today's technology makes information more accessible with a worldwide reach.

We need to recognize that the Spirit of God is at work. Because the digital age has changed how ideas spread, women—who have historically existed in the margins of theological conversation—have an opportunity to add to the conversation without ever leaving their desks," said Hannah Anderson, who recently discussed the outsourcing of women's ministry on Persuasion, a Christ and Pop Culture podcast. "In the past, the lack of infrastructure designed to promote female voices would have held them back; but today, women who are gifted to teach, lead, or encourage have opportunity to actualize these gifts in a public way.²³

²¹ "Summit," Marcella Project, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.marcellaproject.com/the-summit>.

²² Excerpted from interview with W5.

²³ Kate Shellnutt, "The Bigger Story Behind Jen Hatmaker," *Christianity Today*, November 15, 2016, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/november-web-only/bigger-story-behind-jen-hatmaker.html>. Hannah Anderson is the author of *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image* and blogs at www.sometimesalight.com.

Whereas, the names of evangelical women shaping the church in the twentieth-century could almost be counted on two hands, the number today is burgeoning. Anne Graham Lotz, Kay Arthur, and Beth Moore wrote books and gained an audience. Now blogs are prolific and provide the opportunity for a following which brings speaking engagements. To that point, several years ago *Christianity Today* asked “key leaders which Christian women are most profoundly shaping the evangelical church and North American society”²⁴ and featured an article entitled “50 Women You Should Know.” Sarah Pulliam Bailey, online editor for *Christianity Today*, states that the cover package would have been inconceivable at an earlier period:

A few years ago, *Christianity Today* associate editor Katelyn Beaty and I brainstormed the number of Christian women in public life, coming up with just a few names for a Her.meneutics piece. We noted obvious names like Bible teachers Beth Moore, Joyce Meyer, and Anne Graham Lotz, but were discouraged when we tried to pinpoint influential Christian women in other arenas. Since then, with the help of several influential Christian leaders, we began paying closer attention to women who have risen to leadership in various sectors. We began noting how women have entered into prominent political, business, or other leadership positions, while others have also been paving the way in the arts, education, and ministry. . . . This list is hardly the last word, but it recognizes the growing public role of Christian women in our movement and culture, and suggests the ways they are shaping our future.²⁵

The fact that so many Christian women are named, pictured and known is a change. The internet itself is one of the reasons. “That kingdom has expanded in the Internet era, when ambitious women can draw mass followings around their writings, teachings, and

²⁴ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “50 Christian Women You Should Know.” *Christianity Today*, September 28, 2012, accessed February 6, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/october/50-women-you-should-know.html?start=2,1>.

²⁵ Bailey, 1-2.

events without the restrictions of geography, official titles, or other structures.”²⁶ The ability to have a platform and a voice is greatly enhanced through advanced technology and social media.

The websites of the various ministries researched include vimeo's and podcasts, which are also distributed through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and available on any device. **IF Gathering's** annual gathering and prayer times are livestreamed. In addition, special online meeting are announced periodically. When **Propel Women's** Bianca Juarez Olthoff released her new book *Play with Fire*, Propel Women offered a five-week virtual book club from September 12- October 10, 2016. They also offer online table conversations about various topics. Rebekah Lyon's newest book *You Are Free*²⁷ was promoted through an email for those signed up from the **Qideas** website. Opportunity was given on February 20, 2017 to participate in a book club and purchase the book on Amazon. An email a week later indicated that the book was the #1 bestseller in Personal and Spiritual Growth categories on Amazon.²⁸ **The Gospel Coalition** featured Mary Willson, Associate Director of Women's Initiatives plenary session from the 2016 Women's Conference on Editor's Choice: The Best of 2016.²⁹ During the two-year research period, a steady stream of additional ministries targeting women were launched with websites, social media and, sometimes, books. In

²⁶ Shellnut, 1.

²⁷ This kind of ministry from Q seems to have replaced QWomen Conferences.

²⁸ Group email sent from Rebekah Lyons received February 28, 2017 at 7:48 CST.

²⁹ Collin Hansen, “Editor’s Choice: The Best of 2016,” The Gospel Coalition, December 29, 2016, accessed December 29, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/editors-choice-the-best-of-2016>.

postmodern times, technology has provided an avenue for women to be heard by a broader audience without having to be a leader within the local church.³⁰

Technology has provided an unprecedented forum for women teachers. As Shellnutt points out, this is of great benefit, but not without its problems. She quotes Jen Wilkins, minister at Village Church in Dallas and associated with The Gospel Coalition, “National women leaders should be a reference point, but not a replacement for female leadership at the local church level.”³¹ Quoting Hannah Anderson, Shellnutt challenges the church:

If Paul is correct that the church is ‘the pillar and ground of truth,’ the way forward is not to shame female leaders for using their gifts without theological credentials. The way forward is for the church to identify and support gifted women, partnering with them via theological training and commissioned ministry positions. If you don’t want women breaking down the doors simply open them for them.³²

Technology in the postmodern age does provide a platform that women have not always had. In that regard, it is a powerful tool that has allowed women (and for that matter men) to expand their ministry influence. However, this same breadth of influence does challenge the church in its need to provide room for its trained and gifted women to operate within its boundaries.

³⁰ In addition to the recognition brought to current Christian women, biographies of influential women in the past have surfaced as well. October 2015 marked the release of the film *Many Beautiful Things*, a documentary of the life of Lillias Trotter, who sacrificed a promising career in painting to minister to women and children in Algeria. Also in 2015, Katharine Bushnell’s forgotten work and life were brought back to life through the work of Kristin Kobes Du Mez.

³¹ Shellnutt, 4.

³² Shellnutt, 4.

Leadership Boards/Teams Are Gender-Inclusive

Over the last decades, many books³³ attest to the effectiveness gained in leadership boards in business and government populated with both men and women. Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* was her own memoir of the obstacles and possible solutions to having both voices heard in solving problems facing business. The progress in this regard has been slower in the evangelical church, but signs of a change are appearing. These signs are evident in the ministries explored through the present research.

A number of the ministries were founded by ministry couples:

Synergy, founded by Carolyn Custis James, had the strong backing of her husband Frank who was present at the first conference in 2004. They partner in speaking on the subject of mutuality. Synergy has since been absorbed into **Missio Alliance** whose board is co-ed. One board member, W4, spoke very positively of her experience at the first board meeting. "We came to the board meeting, and everything was equal instead of having to earn your seat at the table. It was so refreshing. I was included instead of going away without participating. I was asked 'What do you think? It is amazing!"³⁴

Two other ministries were founded by couples, expressing what Carolyn Custis James calls "the Blessed Alliance." **Q** spawned **Q Women** when the need for more targeted conversations for women was obvious by the questions that were arising. Both

³³ A few of the books are *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about How Women Become Leaders* by Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership* by Sally Hegelsen, *Women Lead the Way: Your Guide to Stepping Up to Leadership and Changing the World* by Linda Tarr-Whelan and *Closing the Leadership Gap: Add Women, Change Everything* by Marie C. Wilson.

³⁴ Excerpted from the interview with W4.

husband and wife played a part in the leadership of the previous women's events.

Propel Women is a part of Equip & Empower Ministries. The co-founding couple also work together to fight sexual trafficking through A21 and have founded three churches in Eastern Europe.

IF, a ministry to disciple the next generation of women and was founded through the vision of pastor's wife in Austin, Texas and a group of women whom she asked to join her in prayer. However, her husband was supporting her vision and his praise band has provided worship leadership for the annual gatherings.

Other ministries, although not founded by ministry couples have both men and women on their boards and/or their staffs:

Marcella Project has a co-ed board, and men have asked to attend their events. The online resource **Junia Project** is led by a mother-daughter team, but they lead a volunteer community of men and women advocating for the inclusion of women in leadership in the Christian church and for mutuality in marriage.

Hope Gathering was birthed out of the need to hear female voices of hope for New York City culture. Since Hope is a ministry to women, the planning team is composed of only women from diverse churches, but the founder's husband was the one who triggered the idea. The women on the team represent their churches. W3 commented:

In August 2013, I turned 30. I had been on staff with Cru part-time for ten years and had been in New York City for eight. I kept search for a women's conference in the city because the co-ed conferences were heavy on male speakers and it seemed that women's voices were not heard. I had a dream to see a conference, unlike the women's conferences I had seen. I wanted to allow women from diverse churches to speak to the needs of women in NYC. My

husband challenged me to make it happen. I did a great deal of research and talked to many women about a conference on “hope” in which women’s stories and nitty-gritty issues could be addressed.³⁵

The Gospel Coalition, complementarian by conviction, states on its website that it is led by “fifty-five council members, mostly pastors, who meet annually for fellowship, accountability and gospel strategy.”³⁶ Although their council is all male, their staff is co-ed, and they have a generational team of a boomer and a millennial for the women’s initiatives. **CBE**, egalitarian by conviction, includes both men and women on their Board of Directors, their Board of Reference and their staff.

When it comes to women in leadership positions, evangelical nonprofits lag behind their secular counterparts, according to the first wave of results of a first-of-its-kind study by Wheaton College sociologist Amy Reynolds and Gordon College provost Janel Curry. Women represent, on average, 23 percent of paid evangelical leaders, 21 percent of boards, and 16 percent of top leaders. This lags the broader nonprofit world, where women comprise 43 percent of boards and 40 percent of CEOs.³⁷

Having the benefit of both men and women in the strategic role of envisioning and decision-making, utilizing the gifts and talents of the *imago dei* has been an uphill battle in the secular world and more so in the church. “When it comes to women’s leadership, we live in a land of deep resistance with structural and emotional impediments burned into the cultures of our organizations, into our society, and into

³⁵ Excerpted from interview with W3. Cru is a evangelical non-denominational Christian ministry formerly known as Campus Crusade.

³⁶ “Overview,” The Gospel Coalition, accessed February 4, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/overview>.

³⁷ Ruth Moon, “What the Largest Study of Women Leaders at Evangelical Nonprofits Has Learned So Far,” *Christianity Today*, May 29, 2014, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/may/what-largest-study-women-leaders-at-evangelical-nonprofits.html>.

the psyches and expectations of both sexes.”³⁸ The ministries researched showed intentionality in their gender inclusion in leadership and in boards. In the case of **The Gospel Coalition**, the all-male board reflects its theological conviction. In the case of the ministries targeted distinctly to women, **Hope** and **IF Gatherings**, although there are only women board members, the founder’s husbands were involved with the inception of the ministries.

Plenary Speakers Gender-inclusive with Wide Exposure

The significance of the plenary stage is that all conference participants hear the message of the presenter whereas workshops, focus groups, and connecting sessions hear the message of the presenter or each others’ voices. Of the nine ministries researched, all but one sponsors conferences or summits that give platform to women speakers. **CBE** rotates annual conferences domestically and internationally. **TGC** holds an annual conference and the women’s initiatives have a bi-annual conference both of which have international attendance. **Missio Alliance** also conducts an annual conference that is attended by internationals. **Q** holds a national conference, regional **Q Commons** and weekly podcasts that feature both men and women expert speakers. **Marcella Project** offers an annual Summit to which both men and women are invited to learn from co-ed speakers. Several of the ministries offer annual events with a target audience of women only featuring women speakers. The **IF Gathering** sponsors a national gathering with limited attendance but with IF locals participating nationally and

³⁸ Marie C. Wilson, *Closing the Leadership Gap: Add Women, Change Everything* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), xiii.

internationally. During the first two years of their ministry, they reached one million women in fifty countries.³⁹ **Propel Women** hosts several regional events for women. **Hope Gathering** is indigenous to New York City. **Junia Project**, an online community of men and women does not have an annual conference, but is constantly sharing their ideas and thoughts and has a blog following of 1946 and a Facebook following of 5512 (twenty percent men). “In 2016 more than 236,000 people visited **The Junia Project** website – and we had over 916,000 page views.”⁴⁰ These ministries provide a growing number of platforms for women expositors of Scriptures and topical speakers who in person or online are accessible to both men and women.

Christians for Biblical Equality has always featured men and women plenary speakers as well as workshop leaders with a co-ed audience. Of special notice to this thesis are the plenary speakers of **The Gospel Coalition Women (TGCW)**. **The Gospel Coalition (TGC)** and **TGCW** Conferences are shaped around plenary talks with Bible exposition, workshops exploring topics, and focus groups processing the content of the plenary sessions. **TGC** Conferences with a co-ed audience reserve the plenary sessions for men presenters due to its complementarian conviction. However, at Women’s Conferences, both theologically trained men and women exposit Scripture. In this regard, both are recognized as equally educated and gifted in handling the Word of God with integrity. The website provides articles from both men and women. The overview section of the website records that sixty-five million views are projected for 2016 for

³⁹ Notes taken from IF Gathering website accessed on September 30, 2015, <https://ifgathering.com/who-we-are/>.

⁴⁰“Best of 2016,” Junia Project, accessed February 27, 2017, <http://juniaproject.com/best-of-2016-this-years-top-ten-posts/>.

English speakers and 8 million for Spanish speakers.

Q and **Q Women** plenary speakers are patterned after a TEDX-talk format, with a presentation followed by interaction. Both men and women deliver these talks which also appear on the website. A new feature begun in Fall 2016 on the website, “This Week’s Question,” expands the ability to include expert speakers, both men and women, to the reach of the internet audience. The week’s question for March 6, 2017 was “How Are Women Shaping Our Vision for Cultural Renewal?”⁴¹ The year 2017 will mark the tenth year of **Q** gatherings traveling the country providing a platform to many speakers during a fast-paced agenda with brief talks and ability to interact. Another strategy, **Q Commons**, allows for the exposure of plenary speakers in a main location to be live-streamed in host U.S. and international cities. Each local host city invites its own set of local speakers, men and women as well. The Denver Q Commons of October 2017 included seventy U.S. and thirteen international cities with co-ed hosts.

Missio Alliance includes both men and women speakers on the plenary stage of the annual conference as well as in the accompanying conference workshops. The first #SheLeads Summit (October 29, 2016) sponsored by **Missio Alliance/Synergy** in partnership with Northern Seminary was promoted with this description on the websites of both partners. As can be seen by the promotion, what might have traditionally been viewed as a women’s conference had both men and women speakers and was promoted as a co-ed event.

⁴¹ “This Week’s Question,” Qideas, March 6, 2017, accessed March 6, 2017, http://qideas.org/?inf_contact_key=839507e019d97cfcf96daf0e7ede892fc43dff5961f363e115f2c45f9ba7583e. Shauna Niequist, Deidre Riggs, Annie Downs, Lisa Jo Baker, all authors with their own websites are featured in the podcasts.

Although there are many amazing and needed conferences and projects related to women leaders in North America, very few are designed specifically to engage women who lead in church and ministry contexts and the unique challenges they face. Fewer still advocate for a vision of gendered leadership that can help us move past the besetting dichotomies we have inherited. Thus Missio Alliance is excited to convene #SheLeads as a multi-regional summit to connect, resource, and empower women and men as church leaders as we seek to reclaim a fuller and more faithful expression of partnered ministry in God's mission.⁴²

Although the focus of **IF** and **Hope Gatherings**, **Marcella Project** and **Propel Women** is the training of women, their messages by women are accessible to men and women alike on their websites. According to the founder of the **Marcella Project**, men have requested to be included in the programs attended presently by women only.

More than in previous times, men as well as women may hear the voices of Christian women. However, as Jen Wilkin points out: "While most evangelical women know their Tim Kellers from their Rick Warrens, male pastors aren't expected to parse female teachers."⁴³ There is much room for growth.

Activism toward the Plight of Women in the Global Context

As was made clear in Chapter One, oppression of women in the global context is a problem that must be addressed by the church. The ministries researched are active in the fight in numerous ways.

The November 2014 **Q Women's Conference** sought to raise awareness of the global needs of women (and men) through the sale of goods from women in under-

⁴² "SHELeads," Northern Seminary, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.seminary.edu/news/sheleads-reclaiming-the-blessed-alliance-for-faithful-mission>.

⁴³ Shellnutt, 1.

resourced and developing nations and speakers who are activists. One of the speakers, Shannon Sedgwick Davis was known for her efforts in stopping Joseph Kony in Uganda.⁴⁴

The **IF Gathering** has sponsored several projects helping women in other countries, but in October 2015 launched a joint project with International Justice Mission (IJM)⁴⁵ for the *Just Courage* seven-week study about justice. “We will go deep together to discover what it looks like to be women that love and seek justice. . . .In their first ever partnership of this kind, IJM desires to invest time in women that desire to make a difference on this world.”⁴⁶

The November 2015 **Propel Women’s Event** in Tulsa, Oklahoma on November 14, 2015 featured a segment about A21 and sexual trafficking. An offering was collected for those who desired to participate.

The June 2016 **Gospel Coalition Women’s Conference** in Indianapolis, Indiana promoted an International Outreach to provide Middle Eastern Women with theological resources in Arabic and Farsi with a goal to raise \$20,000 during the three-day conference. The larger organization also has an entire International segment on their website which includes free resources and the Theological Relief project.⁴⁷

Although **Synergy** has not sponsored a particular project, Sheryl WuDunn, co-

⁴⁴ Laura Joyce Davis, “Meet the Mom Who Stopped Joseph Kony,” *Christianity Today*, February 10, 2015, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/januaryfebruary/meet-mom-who-stopped-joseph-kony.html>.

⁴⁵ “A global organization that protects the poor from violence,” accessed March 1, 2017, <https://www.ijm.org/who-we-are>.

⁴⁶ Notes taken from the website accessed September 30, 2015, <https://ifgathering.com>.

⁴⁷ “International,” The Gospel Coalition, accessed March 2, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/international>.

author of *Half the Sky* was a keynote speaker at the March 2011 Synergy conference in Orlando, Florida. Carolyn Custis James whose reading of WuDunn's book caused her to see the necessity of a global conversation cries out for justice:

We need a global conversation about the Bible's message for women because a global conversation safeguards us from proclaiming a prosperity gospel for women that works for some (at least for a time) and is utterly crushing to vast number of women in our own culture and elsewhere in the world. The Bible's message for women doesn't depend on ideal circumstances, but applies fully to those who live in the brutal outskirts of society where poverty engulfs, education is non-existent, women's bodies are ravaged, and lives are in constant period simply because they are female.⁴⁸

Synergy also sponsored an interview with Chai Ling,⁴⁹ Chinese activist, author of *A Heart for Freedom* and founder of All Girls Allowed.⁵⁰ Chai Ling was the commander-in-chief of student protesters at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Synergy's attention to worldwide justice for women is consistent with their adoption into the larger **Missio Alliance** context as demonstrated by the organization's focus on cultural as well as doctrinal issues: "What does it mean to say women are full participants in the ministry of the church alongside men?" and "What does it mean to say that God is at work for justice in the world in and through Jesus Christ? We seek to understand how justice is determined by Jesus and His reign both in and outside the

⁴⁸ Carolyn Custis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 37.

⁴⁹ Carolyn Custis James, "All Girls Allowed!" November 23, 2011, accessed on March 2, 2017, <https://carolyncustisjames.com/2011/11/23/all-girls-allowed/>. The full-length interview is available on this website.

⁵⁰ "Who We Are: Mission," All Girls Allowed, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.allgirlsalloowed.org/about/who-we-are>. "All Girls Allowed seeks to restore the God-given life, value and dignity to women by seeking transformation both of hearts and of societies. We seek to emulate God's command in Micah 6:8 ("Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God"). It targets the injustice of female genocide due to the One Child Policy.

church.”⁵¹

Christians for Biblical Equality with its long history of advocating for mutuality has the longest history (since 1988) of all these ministries for advocating for mutuality worldwide. They make clear their commitment to the worldwide community: “We are a global community. CBE partners, supporters, and organizational members come from over sixty countries and every corner of the United States. They advocate for the shared authority of men and women in their families, churches, workplaces, and cultures all over the world.”⁵² The available resources are extensive and include books on injustice in various countries as well as resources translated into a number of languages. The bookstore includes “over 2000 curated and reviewed multi-media resources including books, journals, recordings, curriculum, international/non-English and CBE-published materials.”⁵³ The annual conference rotates between cities in the U. S. and other countries. The 2016 Conference was in South Africa.

The global world is a reality for the church in this postmodern age. Christ’s command to go into all the world (Matthew 28:18-20) takes on a new meaning in this age. The younger evangelicals attention for social action and experience prompt proactive, relational and financial involvement.

⁵¹ “About: The Focus of Our Work/Cultural Issues,” Missio Alliance, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.missioalliance.org/focus/>. These questions are listed under the Cultural Issues section of “The Focus of Our Work.”

⁵² “About,” CBE, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/about-cbe>.

⁵³ “Homepage,” CBE, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.cbeinternational.org>.

Conclusion

More conclusions were found than those conveyed in this section, but these were chosen because of the overarching theme of mutuality presented in this thesis. The younger evangelical's emphasis on diversity and the desire for an embodied apologetic⁵⁴ spawn a desire for a co-ed, multi-cultural, multi-class, priesthood-of-all-believers-community. Since many traditional churches are homogenous, alliances and coalitions provide an avenue for the diversity of the eschatological church. The postmodern shift has produced a generation that is shaped by a different culture. With regard to gender, this generation is accustomed to the presence of women in leadership in the government, the military, the marketplace, and the health field and even in ecclesiastical domains. It has produced a digital world that is global. Despite the evil and suffering in the present age and the obvious clash of postmodernism itself with Christianity, this cultural shift opens doors for the Gospel and the Blessed Alliance.

Suggested Further Research

The present research focused on the evangelical ministries founded in the postmodern era based on their ministry focus to women or advocacy for mutuality. These ministries that are non-denominational themselves were chosen because they were outside of the inherited church and allowed for diversity and for inclusive gender participation.

Beyond this thesis-project, this author would recommend three areas of

⁵⁴ See Webber's table on the younger evangelicals in Appendix B.

continued research: one, research of a para-church ministry focused on international missions; two, research of a denominational structure, and three, the development of a practical tool of gender reconciliation for use in evangelical churches and organizations.

Toward the end of the research for this present work, the author was introduced to the work of Missio Nexus.⁵⁵ A 2012 merger of Cross Global Link and The Mission Exchange, it is the largest and most inclusive expression of Great Commission-oriented evangelicals in North America. It includes a Women's Development track. The organization has recently assessed the diversity of their member churches and organizations on gender roles in leadership and have encouraged related conversations to take place. Given the early history of women's struggle for inclusion in foreign missions yet with ultimate success in the formation of missionary societies and field service, a study on the organization's current gender discussions would provide a good case study and possibly a prototype for other mission agencies.

Denominations have felt the effects of postmodernism on membership and hierachal leadership structures.⁵⁶ Oftentimes, the discussions within denominations about gender are narrowly focused on roles and ordination and do not focus on the broader issues of mutuality including socialized attitudes, communication, lack of an historical, sociological and theological education about it. Research within a particular denomination could be undertaken to ascertain how it is responding to the cultural shift

⁵⁵ Missio Nexus, <https://missionexus.org>, accessed September 16, 2016.

⁵⁶ David A. Roozen, "National Denominational Structures' Engagement with Postmodernity: An Integrative Summary from an Organizational Perspective," in *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times*, David A. Roozen and James R. Nieman, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 588-624, accessed February 4, 2017, <http://hirr.hartsem.edu/denom/DRoozen.pdf>.

and what structures and training might best promote a way forward for the millennial generation in terms of mutuality based on Scripture.

A final suggestion is to research the development of a very practical tool for gender reconciliation for use in evangelical churches and ministries. It has been the experience of the author that many churches and agencies have a desire to engage the conversation of gender understanding on mutuality, yet the topic is avoided out of fear. A practical tool that helps them seek new pathways and language to further conversations based on Scripture would be a profitable follow-up of the present work. Using a framework of complementarian versus egalitarian can get polemical and devolve into unhelpful and sometimes damaging dialogue. The postmodern age is more conducive to authenticity and conversation.⁵⁷ A tool that starts with an understanding of Satan as the originator of the initial ruptured relationship could demonstrate who the real enemy is. Then, focusing on the reconciliation brought through Christ's redemption of his people might help to foster discussion rather than argument in the postmodern context.

Final Conclusion

The postmodern cultural shift can be seen as a pathway for the advancing the Gospel through the restoration of God's design for the Blessed Alliance. The millennials' emphasis on diverse community and incarnational embodiment provide the church an opportunity to speak to the culture in a way that is consistent with the reality of the

⁵⁷ See Webber's table on the younger evangelicals in Appendix B.

transformation the Gospel brings: “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:10-11). The church is an embodied apologetic.

The women’s issue is not just a women’s issue. It is an issue of human thriving and more than that, an issue for the entire church. Only the church has been given the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:19). The church alone has been given power for transformation through the gospel (Romans 1:16; Romans 8:22-23). The church alone has been given the ability to bless all the nations (Genesis 12:2-3; Galatians 3:29). The church began with two people of God’s own design as recorded in Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

The church is the body of Christ, the chief instrument through which his heart and will is worked out in the world today. Here now, the church is to embody, and not just announce, the good news. Lesslie Newbigin, a great twentieth-century missionary and vigorous champion of the uniqueness of Christ in an age of pluralism, has said: “The social order is to be itself a new social order.” And this new social order, because it breathes the spirit of its founder rather than the spirit of the world, will not be fixated on maintaining power and control (or addicted to the literature of leadership), but instead will be characterized by the new-order values of mutual respect, self-giving service, reciprocal affirmation, and encouragement of all.⁵⁸

This thesis underscores the critical nature of the relationship of men and women in mission together because of their creation and redemption by God who has gifted them for the good of his church and his world. It has shown the urgent need for global

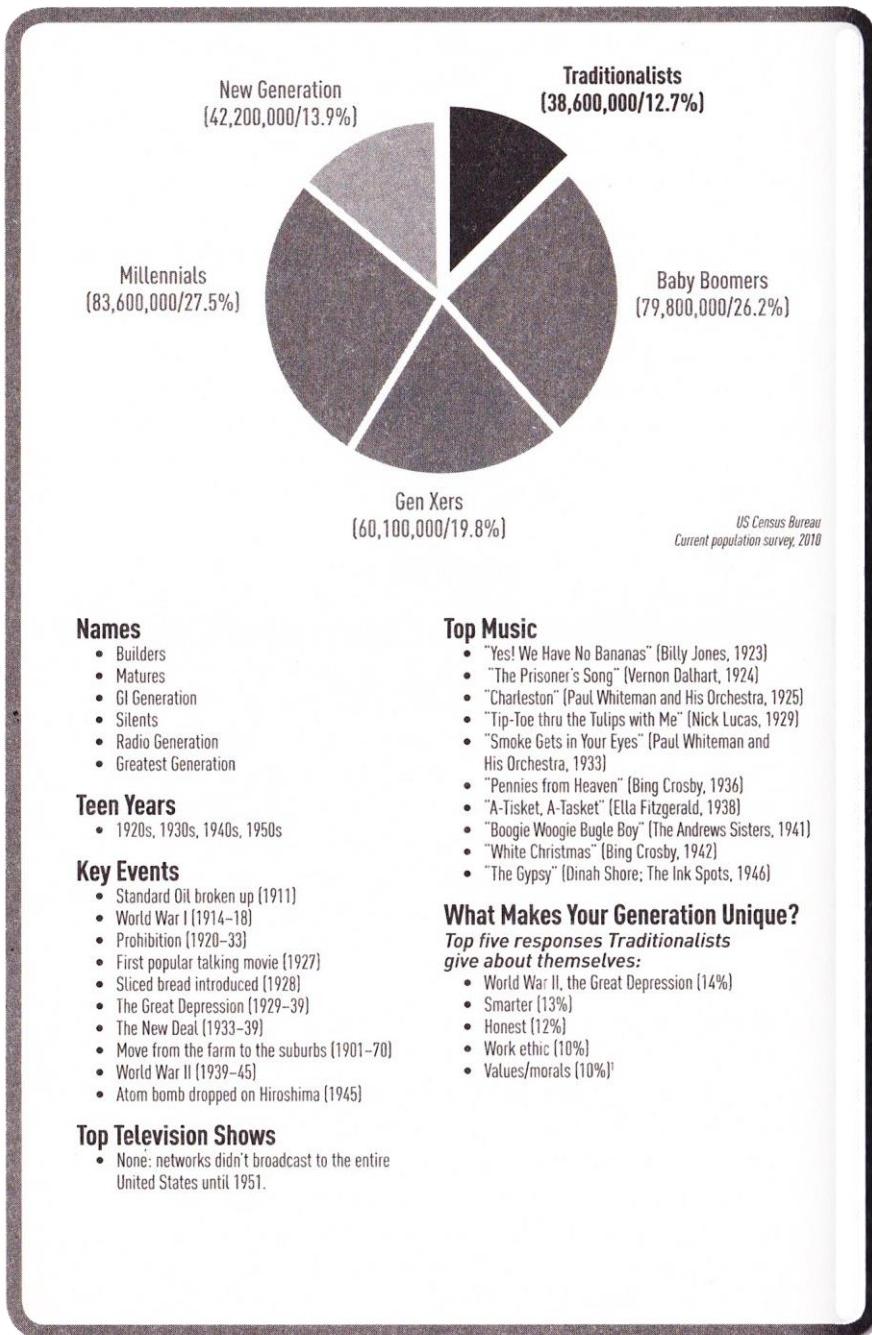
⁵⁸ Glen G. Scorgie, *The Journey Back to Eden: Restoring the Creator’s Design for Women and Men* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 189.

action to restore the Blessed Alliance. It argues that God is present in the upheaval and is advancing the ultimate restoration of his creation to and for his glory through his Spirit co-laboring with man and woman: *imago dei*.

APPENDIX A: GENERATIONAL CHARTS FROM HADYN SHAW



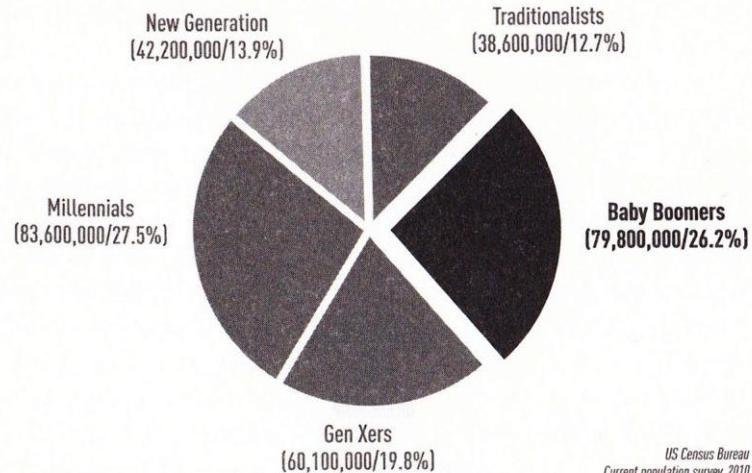
Traditionalists (Born before 1945)



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Baby Boomers (Born 1946–64)



Names

- Baby Boomers

Teen Years

- 1960s and 1970s

Key Events

- Surge of births after World War II
- Robust economic expansion
- Television
- Civil rights movement (1955–68)
- *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)
- Vietnam Conflict (1954–75)
- Woodstock (1969)
- The Watergate scandal (1972–74)
- US and USSR limit nuclear warhead testing (1976)
- Love Canal evacuation (1978)

Top Television Shows

- *Gunsmoke* (1957–61)
- *Bonanza* (1964–66)
- *The Andy Griffith Show* (1967–68)
- *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* (1968–70)
- *Marcus Welby, M.D.* (1970–71)
- *All in the Family* (1971–76)

Top Music

- "Mack the Knife" (Bobby Darin, 1959)
- "I Can't Stop Loving You" (Ray Charles, 1962)
- "I'm a Believer" (The Monkees, 1966)
- "Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In" (The 5th Dimension, 1969)
- "Joy to the World" (Three Dog Night, 1971)
- "Killing Me Softly with His Song" (Roberta Flack, 1973)
- "Love Will Keep Us Together" (Captain and Tennille, 1975)

What Makes Your Generation Unique?

Top five responses Baby Boomers give about themselves:

- Work ethic (17 percent)
- Respectful (14 percent)
- Values/morals (8 percent)
- "Baby Boomers" (6 percent)
- Smarter (5 percent)

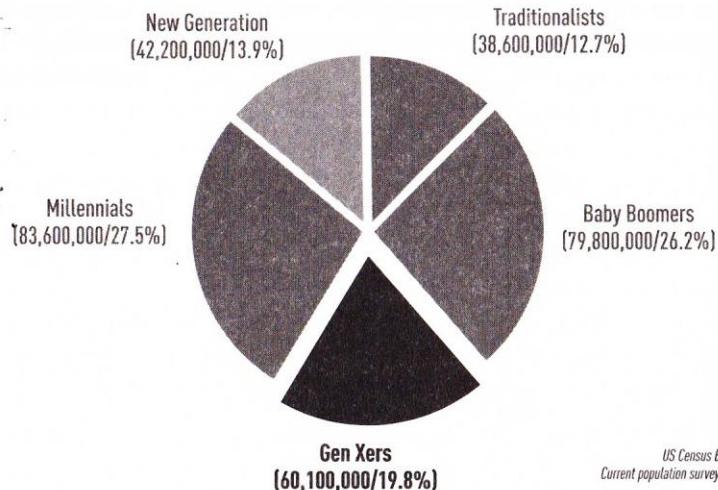
How Boomers See Themselves at Work

Top-ranked terms used to describe coworkers in the same generation:

- Strong work ethic
- Competent
- Ethical
- Ability to handle a crisis
- Willing to take on responsibility
- Good communication skills²



Generation X (Born 1965–80)



Names

- Generation X
- Gen X
- Baby Bust
- Busters
- Slackers

Teen Years

- 1980s and 1990s

Key Events

- Double-digit inflation (1979–81)
- Iranian hostage crisis (1979)
- The Sony Walkman (1980)
- AIDS (1981)
- MTV (1981)
- Household borrowing grows twice as fast as income (mid-1980s)
- Space shuttle *Challenger* explodes (1986)
- Berlin Wall torn down (1989)
- Persian Gulf War (1991)

Top Television Shows

- *Dallas* (1980–84)
- *The Cosby Show* (1985–89)
- *Rosanne* (1989–90)
- *The Simpsons* (debuts 1989)
- *Friends* (debuts 1994)
- *Seinfeld* (1994–95)

Top Music

- "My Sharona" (The Knack, 1979)
- "Ebony and Ivory" (Paul McCartney with Stevie Wonder, 1982)
- "That's What Friends Are For" (Dionne and Friends, 1985)
- "Another Day in Paradise" (Phil Collins, 1989)
- "Dreamlover" (Mariah Carey, 1993)

What Makes Your Generation Unique?

Top five responses Generation Xers give about themselves:

- Technology use (12 percent)
- Work ethic (11 percent)
- Conservative/traditional (7 percent)
- Smarter (6 percent)
- Respectful (5 percent)¹

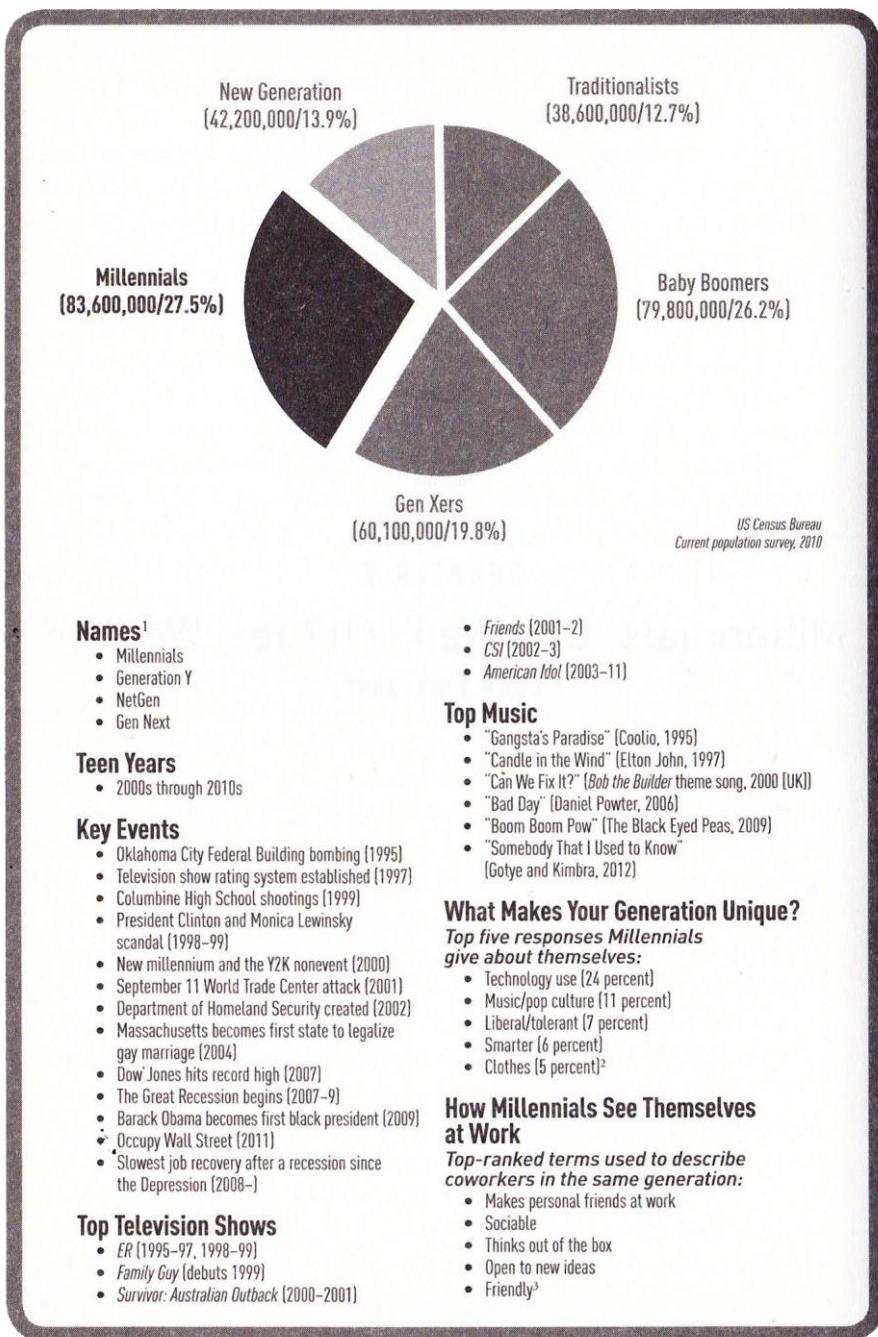
How Gen Xers See Themselves at Work

Top-ranked terms used to describe coworkers in the same generation:

- Confident
- Competent
- Willing to take responsibility
- Willing to put in extra time to wrap a job
- Ethical²



Millennials (Born 1981–2001)



APPENDIX B: TABLES FROM ROBERT E. WEBBER

Table 2
Comparison of Traditional, Pragmatic, and Younger Evangelicals

	Traditional Evangelicals 1950–1975	Pragmatic Evangelicals 1975–2000	Younger Evangelicals 2000–
Cultural Situation	Modern worldview Industrial society Post-WW II Vietnam War	Transitional paradigm Technological society	Postmodern worldview Internet society War on terrorism
Communication Styles	Print Verbal	Broadcast Presentational	Internet Interactive
Generation	Booster Traditional	Boomer Innovative	“Twenty-Something” Deconstruction/ Reconstruction
Attitude toward History	Maintain distinctives of twentieth-century fundamentals	Get a fresh start Ahistorical	Draw from the wisdom of the past The road to the future runs through the past
Theological Commitment	Christianity as a rational worldview	Christianity as therapy Answers needs	Christianity as a community of faith Ancient/Reformation
Apologetics Style	Evidential Foundational	Christianity as meaning-giver Experiential Personal faith	Embrace the metanarrative Embodied apologetic Communal faith
Ecclesial Paradigm	Constantinian church Civil Religion	Culturally sensitive church Market driven	Missional church Countercultural
Church Style	Neighborhood churches Rural	Megachurch Suburban Market targeted	Small church Back to cities Intercultural
Leadership Style	Pastor centered	Managerial model CEO	Team ministry Priesthood of all
Youth Ministry	Church-centered programs	Outreach programs Weekend fun retreats	Prayer, Bible study, worship, social service
Education	Sunday school Information centered	Target generational groups and needs	Intergenerational formation in community
Spirituality	Keep the rules	Prosperity and success	Authentic embodiment
Worship	Traditional	Contemporary	Convergence
Art	Restrained	Art as illustration	Incarnational embodiment
Evangelism	Mass evangelism	Seeker service	Process evangelism
Activists	Beginnings of evangelical social action	Need-driven social action (i.e., divorce groups, drug rehab, etc.)	Rebuild cities and neighborhoods

Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 17, 18. Used by permission.

Table A: Paradigms of Church History

Ancient	Medieval	Reformation	Modern	Postmodern
Mystery Community Symbol	Institutional	Word	Reason Systematic & Analytical Verbal Individualistic	Mystery Community Symbol

Robert E. Webber. *Ancient-Future Faith*. Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 1999, 34. Used by permission.

Table D: A Comparison of the Modern, Postmodern, and Classical/Evangelical Worldviews

The Modern Worldview	The Postmodern Worldview	A Classical/Evangelical Response
The Scientific Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mechanistic world • knowable is attainable • facts are objective • universal truth based on the scientific method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mysterious world • knowledge not attainable • only interpreted facts • no universal worldview—all is relative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recovery of the mystery of Christ and a Christocentric worldview • knowledge in community • apostolic interpretation • Christianity rightly understood and embodied is the universal faith for all
The Philosophical Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distinction between subject/object • idea of progress • optimistic view of humanity • individualism • by reason we can find one overarching metanarrative that speaks the truth about the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • symbiosis—all things are interrelated • the new hermeneutic of history views each epoch within its own culture • recognition of dualism—the conflict between good and evil • the importance of community • the world is full of competing narratives, none of which are universal truth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christocentric worldview—Christ interrelated to all things • appreciation of early church as well as other paradigms of faith • spiritual warfare • primacy of the church • restoration of the Christian metanarrative in worship
The Communication Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conceptual knowledge • propositional knowledge (facts) • knowledge as information • language corresponds to truth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • symbolic knowledge • the return to myth, image, metaphor, story, analogy (knowing in community) • knowledge as wisdom construct with no universal • language is a social meaning or authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preanalytic and preexperiential knowing • communal knowledge and authority • education and nurture as character formation • universality, antiquity, and consensus “establish rule of faith” within the Christian community

Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 37. Used by permission.

Table F: Christ in the Paradigms of History

Ancient	Medieval	Reformation	Modern	Postmodern
<i>Christus Victor</i>	Anselmic Sacrifice Theory Moral Theory of Abelard	Luther combines sacrifice and <i>Christus Victor</i> Calvin: Sacrifice	Liberal: Example Theory Conservative: Propositionalism Liberal: Expressive-Experiential	By his sacrifice he won a victory over the powers of evil and left us an example to follow <i>Regula Fidei</i> View of Christ regulated by the creeds
Rule of faith, 180				
Nicene Creed, 325				
Chalcedon Creed, 451				

Robert E. Webber. *Ancient-Future Faith*. Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 1999, 67. Used by permission

Table G: The Church Throughout History

Ancient	Medieval	Reformation	Modern	Postmodern
The continuation of the incarnation: the body of Christ	Institutional Visible Sacramental	The herald model; the true church is an invisible inner Christendom	Rise of denominations	Return to incarnational model
The unity of the church Mystery	Juridical		Invisible	Visible Church is the mystical presence of the body of Christ on earth

Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 91. Used by permission.

APPENDIX C: ARTICLE FROM CHRISTIANITY TODAY ABOUT MILLENNIAL WOMEN

6 Leadership Lessons I've Learned from Millennials by Mandy Smith

Christianity Today October 17, 2016

http://www.christianitytoday.com/gifted-for-leadership/2016/october/6-leadership-lessons-ive-learned-from-millennials.html?utm_source=womenleaders&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=12900907&utm_content=472497128&utm_campaign=email

Here's what I'm learning from the Millennial women leaders in my life:

1. Millennial Women are Redefining Leadership

Although they've grown up watching a polished kind of leadership, that model doesn't feel right to them as emerging leaders. That kind of leadership made them question their own ability to lead, so now they're experimenting with how transparency and vulnerability could look, inviting others in behind the scenes of their doubt and wrestling and trusting that God's strength can be shown in weakness.

2. Millennial Women Value Substance and Authenticity

These young women aren't fooled by superficiality, and they work to be who they claim to be. They long for substance and honesty, even if it's uncomfortable. They understand that the world is complicated, and they're learning that God is found in the mess.

3. Millennial Women Both Study and Create Culture

Although they may have been raised in Christian families which protected them from secular culture, they're unafraid of it, always looking for signs of life and hope in it. They see movies, fashion, magazines, music, and social media as places to find clues of how God is at work in the world. Beyond simply observing culture, they have their own part in creating it, often choosing to communicate in clever, funny, and self-effacing ways.

4. Millennial Women are Interested in Justice and Compassion

In their lifetimes, many of these women have watched their schools, neighborhoods, and TV shows become more diverse, so they're comfortable with difference. This generation's access to the Internet has exposed them to experiences very different from their own, and these insights inform their moral choices which extends to what they eat and wear, where they live and shop. They have a sense of themselves, but are also open to others (which includes navigating the larger than normal generation gap between themselves and their parents).

5. Millennial Women have Creative and Service-Oriented Approaches to Work

Since this generation can't expect to walk straight out of college and into a career, many young women are finding creative ways to reimagine work, setting aside the traditional "career as personal brand" approach and seeing their life's work as a way to serve. This may mean they're willing to cobble together a few different jobs to make it work. Others create jobs for themselves—like creating an app or starting an Etsy store—and continue to fit some volunteering in there, too.

6. Millennial Women are Pioneering New Gender Roles

Since this generation has seen their mothers' (and perhaps grandmothers') generation stepping into new roles, they've had a chance to learn from both the positive and

negative examples of pioneering women. So Millennial women are often less reactionary than previous generations of women and are finding healing from stereotypes. They often don't feel the need for exclusive women's ministries but are comfortable in mixed groups and long to find healing between men and women. For Millennials, the way the world is heading is the only world they know—a more global, connected, diverse, risky place. Many of us in middle age look on it with uncertainty because we remember a more predictable time. But we have much to learn from these young women who look on it with hope. The things Millennials are dealing with are not passing trends but seismic cultural shifts taking place—changes that affect education, work, immigration, the family, the economy, and the institutional church, to name just a few. As much as we might lament some of these realities, Millennials are not afraid. So I'm following their lead on how to navigate a changing world with creativity and hope.

APPENDIX D: DEFINING A MOVING TARGET IN A CHANGING WORLD

The purpose of this thesis project is to examine the many recently founded women's leadership resource ministries outside of but serving the church in order to evaluate how they might demonstrate the thesis statement: *the impact of postmodernism on the evangelical church is a key to unlocking a new pathway for the restoration of God's original design for his image bearers--male and female--to build God's kingdom together.* The hypothesis is that these various ministries saw a need that stemmed from the shift from the modern world to the postmodern one. It is also supposed that the local church was not sufficiently aware, equipped or agile enough to easily identify and address the issues that were arising for women in traditional evangelical ministries as the impact of the shift began and continued to be felt. Attention is to be given to the reason for their inception, their structure and funding, their strategies, especially use of Internet technology, their target audience and demographics and their inclusion of men in leadership or attendance.

Informal Advance Research

The author and research project designer has been involved in local, regional, national and international women's ministries for almost thirty years. Although very specific and documented research has been accomplished for this present thesis, it would be difficult to separate out the research that has been on-going throughout a professional ministry career spanning these years that have been full of dramatic shifts for women in ministry.

During a twenty-two year tenure at a large southern reformed evangelical church, the structure of women's ministries was transitioned twice in order to keep current with the shift. The evolution was from traditional circle ministry to more team-based ministries to missional ministries with a direct link to the overall mission of the church. The change indicated a deeper cultural change which had a huge impact on the women themselves, their interests, schedules, needs and mobilization.

While the author served as interim National Director of Women in Ministry in a Presbyterian denomination, the cultural shift led to structural confusion as local churches themselves varied from traditional and pragmatic modern to missional postmodern churches.¹ Some of the latter sought to gather a multi-ethnic, multi-class community while others targeted the suburban unchurched. Another layer of complexity was added by the liberty granted to churches to be complementarian or egalitarian and to presbyteries to ordain or not ordain women.

The author conducted interviews with other denominational leaders as well as academic leaders in women's ministries to collaborate on what the path of the future held. More questions than answers were forthcoming. What all agreed is that it was a time of great change and former structures and ways of thinking were not sufficient in reaching and motivating the women. Some denominations had eliminated the director

¹ These are the terms used throughout Robert E. Webber's *The Younger Evangelicals*.

position entirely.² Others were moving toward regional denominational resourcing because of a shift from hierachal leadership patterns. The idea of community networking outside denominational boundaries played into this decision.

It was in looking for solutions that the numerous newly founded resource ministries for women outside denominational structures were discovered. These ministries seemed to possess a vitality and vigor that had been lost from the traditional denominational structures. What started as a professional dilemma evolved into a thesis-project. As formal research ensued, the nature of encouraged mutuality in these ministries, whether complementarian or egalitarian, became a facet of piqued interest.

Impetus for the Project

Out of a deep interest in theology and the desire to serve Christ and his church, the author of this thesis attended a reformed seminary in the late 1970s, a period which some mark as the beginning of the postmodern era.³ The policy of the seminary during that period was to restrict the accessibility of the Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degree to men only. However, women students in the Masters of Christian Education (M.C.E.) track were required to take the preaching class. Their presentations were called “teaching,” not “preaching.” Although not required for the M.C.E. degree, the author pursued the original languages and theology courses for electives.

The required reading on the women’s issue during seminary was James Hurley and Susan Foh. Paul Jewett was mentioned but not required. He was characterized as off the mark theologically since the seminary had taken a complementarian stance, one which the writer heartily embraced. These books were some of the first books in what became a barrage of tomes over about two decades as the issue of ordination of women became a litmus test of theological conservatism. In this barrage, a book from one vantage point called for the responsive volume from the opposing camp. The issue became a matter of debate in the Evangelical Theological Society⁴ The author was in large degree oblivious to the heat of this debate until entering Gordon-Conwell Seminary almost three decades later in pursuit of the degree for which this thesis is being written.

The catalyst for entrance was a ministry burnout caused by a number of factors, both personal and professional. One of those factors stemmed from being a woman in ministry with leadership and teaching gifts recognized and rewarded within a soft complementarian setting. However, the gifts that allowed entrance into a broad scope

² The Evangelical Presbyterian Church eliminated the salaried position of National Director of Women in Ministry December 2014 and transitioned to a lay committee representing all presbyteries led by a woman teaching elder member of the Committee on Administration.

³ Michael R. Allen & Nora Wendl , “Pruitt-Igoe Now: The Unmentioned Modern Landscape,” accessed October 24, 2016. Some date the postmodern era from the date of the July 15, 1972 demolition of some of the buildings in the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project in St. Louis. It is said to be the end of modern architecture related to public housing. <http://www.pruittigoenow.org/the-unmentioned-modern-landscape/>.

⁴ The 38th meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society met in Atlanta, GA November 20-22, 1986 to discuss “Male and Female in Biblical and Theological Perspective.” See http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/36/36-3/36-3-pp343-355_JETS.pdf for more information.

of ministry, did not accompany entrance into the “office” normally associated with those gifts. Not a problem initially, a sense of isolation and invisibility slowly evolved even though granted a central role within a staff executive structure. The responsibility of giving a talk at the first Synergy Conference as well as the leadership of a church committee led to a study leave focused on reading on women’s issues. As a result a door cracked open allowing in some light from an egalitarian perspective. This light was blinding and most uncomfortable, but demanded to be searched out. Due to the whispers, voices and questions of many women encountered domestically and internationally over years of ministry the door could not be shut. For their sake as well, the matter had to be pursued spiritually and intellectually in order to minister out of a place of theological and personal integrity. The realization that further structure and guidance was necessary for this pursuit led to enrollment in the Doctorate of Ministry program in the Effective Ministries to Women track. The title of the track itself did not attract interest, but a discussion with the professor unleashed a passion and confirmation that the course would deliver what was necessary to gain some clarity on the remaining issue. It did deliver, but the unexpected result was the upending of a position and an uneasiness of passage still being addressed. In order to pursue effective ministry to women in the twenty-first century, the matters at hand must be studied and researched regardless of pursuit of a doctoral degree. A generation stands to be lost if the church is not able to connect with it.

APPENDIX E: APPROVAL AND ONE-PAGE INTERVIEW DOCUMENTS

Consultation comments made by:

Bryan C. Auday, PhD

Consultation for: Susan Nash

ASSIGNMENT COMPLETED

Thanks for taking the time to clarify the project so that I can offer some suggestions. Keep in mind that the observations I have made below do not need to be acted upon; you and your project advisor have the final word. Here are some thoughts that I would like to share with you as I read through your project proposal. They are not in any particular order.

- Wonderful topic. I agree, the questions you are trying to find answers to are meaningful and would be of benefit to several denominations and women's ministry groups.
- I feel you addressed the potential problems that could arise regarding gaining access to the people you want to interview very well. Personally, I would be surprised if the ministry leaders (founders) turned you down. I bet that most will feel flattered that you have taken an interest in their work and ministry.
- When you mentioned how the semi-structured interviews will be conducted, one comment I have is that you try to avoid collecting the information by email. If the others are done face-to-face or by Skype, then I suggest that you conduct a phone (audio) interview, rather than require someone to type their responses. In some instances, getting responses by email can result in abbreviated responses since composing sentences for some people is a time-consuming process.
- One question that you might want to consider asking is: "Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding your ministry?"
- In your assignment you mentioned that you might study the websites and other materials that a particular ministry makes available. You can refer to this as archival data (or materials) for the purpose of the thesis project.
- Since you are planning to record the interviews, you will need to include a statement within the informed consent whereby participants agree to the recording.
- Keep in mind that when you fill out the IRB proposal for the D.Min. office to conduct your data collection that you will need to gain permission from each participant using an informed consent document that you will need to prepare.
- Your project addresses a very meaningful topic—good work.
- I have notified the D.Min. office to let them know you have completed this required assignment.

Note: If you are in need of any additional consulting regarding questionnaire development, constructing a semi-structured interview, assembling a focus group, research methods, computing or interpreting statistics, graphing data, etc., feel free to

contact me in the future. The additional consultation would be on a private pay basis (\$65.00/ hour). I can be reached at: bryan.auday@gordon.edu

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: The Impact of Postmodernism on the Structures and Strategies of Women's Ministries in the 21st Century

Principal Investigator: Susan C. Nash, DMin in Effective Ministry to Women

PURPOSE

This is a research study. The purpose of this research study is to conduct original research in the area of women's ministries that have been founded over the last two decades in order to answer the question of how postmodernism has impacted their structures and strategies for reaching the culture in which they live with the good news of the Gospel. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. You may ask any questions about the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear.

We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you are a founder of or leader in one of the aforementioned ministries or have authored a book about the impact of postmodernism on the church and society. In that capacity, you are deemed a valuable and credible source of information to the investigator in this area of research.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, your involvement in the interview process will last for 1-2 hours. The following procedures are involved in this study. The preferred interview style would be in person with the author of the project as your interviewer using a semi-structured style. Responses to certain questions may inspire other questions. The interview (if in person or by Skype) will be taped for transfer into a transcript for the purpose of analysis with other transcripts to discern commonalities and unique features. The outcome of the analysis will be recorded in the final chapter of the doctoral thesis. A copy of the transcript and the outcomes will be available for each participant. The thesis would be submitted in January 2015 and defended in March 2015.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

BENEFITS

The potential personal benefits that may occur as a result of your participation in this study are the thoughtful concentration and articulation of your ministries purpose, history and effect. The benefits to the church and women's ministry leaders is great. Guidance and direction in an age of great cultural change and questioning from

experienced women leaders with a global audience is invaluable. Learning from such experts has potential for building disciples and the kingdom through them. The study is for the purpose of filling in gaps in the literature about women's ministries in the 21st century for the growth of God's kingdom.

COMPENSATION

You will not be compensated for participating in this research project.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent you desire.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all.

QUESTIONS

Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: [**Susan Nash, 901-412-6933, susancnash1951@att.net**]. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Co-Chair of the Institutional Review Board, David A. Currie, at: dcurrie@gordonconwell.edu; 978-646-4176

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

RESEARCHER STATEMENT

I have discussed the above points with the participant. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

(Signature of Researcher)

Semi-Structured Interview
DMin Research Project
Susan C. Nash

The topic of my thesis is "The Impact of Postmodernism on the Structures and Strategies of Women's Ministries in the 21st Century. This questionnaire is designed to explore the impact of postmodernism on the founding, direction, structure and strategy of your ministry. The information you provide will be helpful for the church and for women leaders. This study is being conducted by Susan Nash in fulfillment of the requirement of a thesis for a DMin in Effective Ministry to Women from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. By participating in this interview, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study. Many books have been written about the seismic shift that has taken place in culture, society, economics, religion and the church from the passing of the modern age into the postmodern. Since the better part of my 30 years of ministry have had a major concentration within women's ministries, I want to seek to understand what those in the field are discovering.

Standard questions:

1. Why and when did your ministry start?
2. What distinguishes your ministry from other current women's ministries?
3. Do you partner with any other ministries? Are you associated with a certain church or denomination? Why or why not?
4. How is your ministry structured? What is its vision and mission? What are your strategies? How are you funded?
5. Who is the target audience and do you have current demographics?
6. Are you conscious of ministering to the "postmodern" woman? How does that differ from any previous ministry strategies?
7. Could you comment on the importance of technology to your ministry?
8. Given your own understanding of postmodernism, how would you describe its impact on the vision and mission of your ministry?
9. What have you found to be the most important model(s) for ministering to women today?
10. What do you think are the unique opportunities the church has today? What unique opportunities do postmodern women have?
11. Could you recommend any articles or books that have influenced the development of this ministry or that you find helpful in understanding ministry to women in this current cultural context?
12. Would you like me to know anything else about the ministry?

APPENDIX F: LIST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED FOR THESIS-PROJECT

The following is a list of the ministries targeted for interviews. All those interviewed are indicated by the thesis-project noted with the name of the ministry they lead and the date, time and method of the interview.

- Q Women: W1, November 4, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. (in person)
- The Gospel Coalition (TGC) Women's Conference: W2, November 14, 2014 (received in written form by email)
- Hope Gathering: W3, January 30, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. (Skype, then phone)
- Synergy/Missio Alliance: W4, February 12, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. (phone)
- Marcella Project: W5, October 30, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. (phone)
- Propel Women: W6, November 11, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. (phone)
- Junia Project: W7, November 23, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. (Skype)
- CBE, although no formal interview was conducted, founding member Dr. Mathews gave information and insight
- If Gathering, interview requested and declined

Initially Proverbs 31 Ministries had agreed to be included in the interview process, but later had to decline. In addition to the above interviews, interviews of a different nature were requested from two women authors whose books played a significant role in this project. One author, known as W8 agreed and granted an interview that took place in person on November 14, 2014 at 11 a.m. In order to include a man in the interview process, an interview was requested and accepted with Missio Alliance (the organization that adopted Synergy). The interview with M1 took place by phone on May 17, 2016

APPENDIX G: LIST OF MINISTRY WEBSITES RESEARCHED FOR THESIS-PROJECT

The following are the ministries that are the focus of this thesis-project. They are listed with the dates of inception:

- Christians for Biblical Equality, Los Angeles CA (January 1988)
<http://www.cbeinternational.org>
- Hope Gathering, New York NY (September 2014)
<http://www.hopegathering.com>
- If Gathering, Austin TX (Fall 2013)
<https://ifgathering.com>
- Junia Project, Los Angeles CA (April 2013)
<http://juniaproject.com>
- Marcella Project, Dallas TX (2012)
<http://www.marcellaproject.com/#the-mission>
- Propel Women (January 2015)
<http://www.propelwomen.org>
- Q Women, New York then Franklin TN (November 2013)
Part of QIdeas and no longer has a separate website
<http://qideas.org>
- Synergy Orlando FL (2003)
(Synergy became a part of Missio Alliance May 2015)
<http://www.missioalliance.org>
- The Gospel Coalition (TGC) Women, Chicago IL (June 2012)
(TGC was founded May 2005 with the first Women's Conference held in 2012)
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org>
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/tgcw16-conference-media-now-available>

Since the research began, other ministries founded by women have surfaced:

- Alexis of The Acropolis Project
<http://theacropolisproject.com/>
- Jenni Catron of 4Sight Consulting Group
<https://get4sight.com>
- Emily B. Cummins of Helping You Reach Your Full Potential
<http://emilybcummins.com>
- Natasha Sistrunk Robinson of Lead on Purpose
<http://www.natashasrobinson.com>

APPENDIX H: LIST OF CONFERENCES ATTENDED OR LIVESTREAMED

Conferences of Ministries Attended

- *IF Gathering*—February 7-8, 2014 by personal livestream of second day
- *Q Women*—November 7, 2014 in Franklin TN
Q Commons—October 13, 2016 in Memphis TN through group livestream
- *TGC Women's Conference*—April 13-15, 2014 in Orlando FL
June 16-18, 2016 in Indianapolis IN
- *Missio Alliance*—May 7-9, 2015 in Old Town Alexandria VA
Redeeming Sex—February 27, 2016, Memphis TN (Served on panel)
- *Synergy*—all conferences but one and speaker at first conference in 2004
Synergy special event and workshop at 2015 Missio Alliance Conference
#SheLeads—October 29, 2016 in Chicago IL
- *CBE Conference*—July 24-26, 2015 in Los Angeles CA (A plenary presentation made at the conference was by Jackie Roese on the personal ministry story that led to the founding of the Marcella Project)
- *Propel Women*—November 14, 2015 in Tulsa OK

APPENDIX I: SETTINGS AT WHICH FINDINGS WERE SHARED

Formal Settings Where Partial Research Was Shared

- Women's Retreat, September 5-6, 2014, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Jackson TN
- Women's Retreat, February 6-7, 2015, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Little Rock AR
- Continuing Education Lecture, April 9, 2015, Union University Town and Gown, Jackson TN
- Women's Retreat, April 18, 2015, Faith Presbyterian Church, Germantown TN
- Women's Retreat, September 26, 2015, Munford Presbyterian Church, Munford TN
- Panel of Redeeming Sex Seminar, February 27, 2016, Several Downtown Memphis Churches, Memphis TN
- Women's Leadership Retreat, August 9, 2016, Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis TN

Informal Settings Where Partial Findings Were Shared

- Discussions with pastors and staff of Downtown Church (where researcher serves as Director of Women's Discipleship)
- Discussion with Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church, Baton Rouge
- Mentoring relationships with Mallory Hawkins (RTS Orlando student), Ashleigh Peak (consultant to Christ City Church, Memphis), Lisa Turner (Director of Women's Ministries, Independent Presbyterian Church Memphis) and Jennifer Tircuit (Director of Women's Ministries, Grace Community Church, Memphis)
- Relationships with women in ministry: Kori Porter (TGC Women workshop leader), Suzanne Stelling (Director of Women in Ministry, Cedar Springs Church, Knoxville), Jo Kadlecik (Author, Australia)

APPENDIX J: EXCERPTS FROM *WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING*

The following quotes were taken from the book *Women's Ways of Knowing* which explains the seminal work of a team of women considering the reasons for the sense of being silenced that women sometimes experience in their homes and schools. The findings, based on in-depth interviews with one-hundred-thirty-five women. The quotes from the book give meaning to the difference in what is known as a "received knower" versus a "constructed knower."

We do not think of the ordinary person as preoccupied with such difficult and profound questions as: What is truth? What is authority? To whom do I list? What counts for me as evidence? How do I know what I know? Yet to ask ourselves these questions and to reflect on our answers is more than an intellectual exercise for our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it. They affect our definitions of ourselves, the way we interact with other, our public and private personae, our sense of control over life events, our views of teaching and learning, and our conceptions of morality.¹

. . . We believe that conceptions of knowledge and truth that are accepted and articulated today have been shaped throughout history by the male-dominated majority culture. Drawing on their own perspective and vision, men have constructed the prevailing theories, written history, and set values that have become the guiding principles for men and women alike. . . . Even girls' schools and women's colleges have been modeled after male institutions to give women an education "equivalent" to men's. Relatively little attention has been given to modes of learning, knowing, and valuing that may be specific to, or at least common in, women. It is likely that the commonly accepted stereotype of women's thinking as emotional, intuitive, and personalized has contributed to the devaluation of women's minds and contributions, particularly in Western technologically oriented cultures, which value rationalism and objectivity . . . Feminists are beginning to articulate the value of the female world and to reshape the disciplines to include the woman's voice, while continuing to press for the right of women to participate as equals in the male world.²

Anecdotal reports as well as research on sex differences indicate that girls and women have more difficulty than boys and men in: asserting their authority or considering themselves as authorities . . . expressing themselves in public so that

¹ Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rul Godlberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986, 1997), 3.

² Belenky, et al., 5-6.

others will listen . . .in gaining respect of others for their minds and their ideas; and in fully utilizing their capabilities and training in the world of work.³

Chapter Headings to Part I of *Women's Ways of Knowing* Denoting the Stages of Knowing⁴

1. Silence
2. Received Knowledge: Listening to the voices of others
3. Subjective Knowledge: The inner voice, the quest for self
4. Procedural Knowledge: The voice of reason, separate and connected knowing
5. Constructed Knowledge: Integrating the voices

The Five Stages of Knowing⁵

1. Silence: total dependence on whims of external authority
2. Received Knowledge: receive and reproduce knowledge
3. Subjective Knowledge: truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private and intuitive
4. Procedural Knowledge: rely on objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge
5. Constructed Knowledge: view all knowledge as contextual; value subjective and objective strategies

³ Belenky et al., 4-5.

⁴ Belenky et al., viii.

⁵ "Summary of Women's Ways of Knowing," Ferris State University, Center for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development, accessed July 25, 2015. <http://www.colorado.edu/UCB/AcademicAffairs/ftep/publications/documents/WomensWaysofKnowing.pdf>

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VITA

Susan Clare Nash
February 1, 1951
Millington, Tennessee

EDUCATION

University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa
Bachelor of Arts in French—Graduated May 1973

Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi
Masters of Christian Education—Graduated August 1979

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Doctor of Ministry in Effective Ministries to Women—Expected Graduation May 2017

MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

Downtown Church
Consultant and Director of Women's Discipleship 2010-Present

Evangelical Presbyterian Church Denomination
Interim National Director of Women in Ministry 2012-2014

Northwest Bible Church, Dallas
Germantown Presbyterian Church, Germantown, Tennessee
Church Consultant 2010-2011

First Presbyterian Church, Baton Rouge
Consultant for Leading Change in Church Organization
and Women in Ministry 2008-2010

Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis
Various positions including Special Assistant to Senior Minister,
Director of Women's Ministries, Program Executive, Director of
Women in Ministry 1986-2008